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Christian Parenting: Baptists and the Birds and Bees

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CHRISTIAN PARENTING
Baptists and the Birds and Bees

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

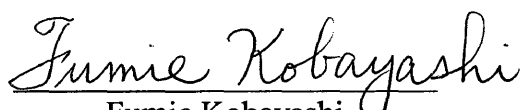
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Fumie Kobayashi

2003

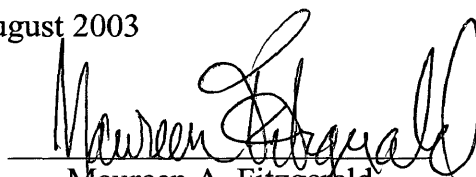
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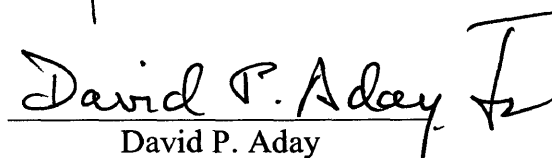
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts


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Approved, August 2003


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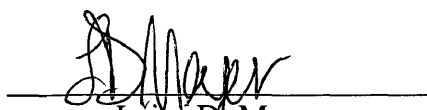

Leisa D. Meyer

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Baptist parents instill sexual morality in their teenage children at the turn of the twenty-first century in America. Fifty members from four churches in Greater Williamsburg Area of Virginia, including two African American and another two white Southern Baptist churches, participated in this project.

Participants try to hold conversations regarding sexuality with the children, weaving their own values and experiences with religious values. The media, school sex education, sexual assault cases, peer pressure, impact of AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy are all concerns which motivate parents to discuss issues of sexuality at home. The participants try to be accessible to their children because they were not satisfied with the amount of advice regarding sexual morality from their own parents, or from the church when they were growing up in the 1960s and the 1970s.

The interview results revealed similarities and distinctions between races, with some class-related responses. The participants' teachings include an emphasis on abstinence until marriage for sons and daughters, as well as how to prevent negative consequences attached to premarital sex, including AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, and the emotional and economical difficulties inherent in a physical relationship. Participants, particularly from Southern Baptist churches, acknowledge sex as a gift from God and as pleasurable, which was a taboo when the participants were growing up. Parents highlighted their own perception of gender with regard to different expectations of boys and girls, and ways to control passionate feelings. Elevation of chastity and respectability appeared in the participants' comments, stigmatizing "promiscuous" peers outside of the church. African Americans avoid publicizing their discussions about sexuality, contrary to white participants who are willing to announce their opinions about sexual morality to the secular world. Southern Baptist participants shift premarital and deviant sexual activities into a code of sin, while African American respondents were more relaxed in acknowledging sexual behaviors that white Baptists refer to as inappropriate, and in discussing ways to prevent AIDS and unwanted pregnancy.

CHRISTIAN PARENTING

INTRODUCTION

This thesis asks how Christian parents instill sexual morality in their children. Through a case study of a group of Southern Baptists in the Greater Williamsburg area of Virginia, the project attempts to provide a complex image of some Christians in the United States. The project involved oral interviews, and participation in and observation of religious services and group activities at four churches. Open-ended questions enabled participants to talk about issues of sexuality as freely as possible in their own words. I applied this style of interviewing in order to obtain qualitative descriptions from each participant. While my case study does not allow broad generalizations beyond this small group, qualitative description focusing on Baptist churches contributes to the literature on Christianity in America.

Sexuality is a system that determines the relations of power with respect to sex by urging us to speak, and not to speak, about sex. Sexuality is a process in that its concept changes historically, reflecting political, social, economic, and cultural phenomena. Sexuality controls people's understandings about who they are by constructing categories and roles of race, class, and gender. It entails and defines such relations as normal and deviant sex, licit and illicit sex, forgiven and forbidden sex, moral

and immoral sex, respectable and disrespectable sex, women's and men's sex, and adults' and children's sexual expression.¹

Many scholars, particularly feminists, analyze so-called "right-wing" political activism. Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, in "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right," demonstrates that the political activism of the right that emerged since the 1970s was a reaction to the feminism and liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s.²

Pechesky describes this "right-wing reactionism [as] openly racist, antifeminist, and also antiliberal . . . capitalist, . . . and male-supremacist."³ Pechesky's article is an attempt to analyze the backlash since the 1970s. Pechesky argues that the New Right literature protests "*all* [italics by Pechesky] forms of sexuality outside the marital, procreative sphere . . . extramarital sex, divorce--all are targets of the New Right's modern 'purity crusade.'"⁴ Pechesky describes women in profamily literature of the New Right as "dependent" and in a dilemma in a movement that advocates women's passivity and subordination.

In Rebecca Klatch's "Coalition and Conflict among Women of the New Right," she argues that the New Right "is not a cohesive movement whose members share a

¹ Michel Foucault, "Shintai wo tsuranuku kenryoku," trans. Toyoko Yamada, Michel Foucault shikou shusei VI : 1976-1977 Sekushuarite/ Shinri, ed. Hisaki Matsuura (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2000) 301-05; Michel Foucault, "Sei no ouken ni koushite," trans. Yasuyuki Shinkai, Michel Foucault shikou shusei VI: 1976-1977 Sekushuarite/ Shinri, ed. Hisaki Matsuura (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2000) 344-54; Michel Foucault, "Kenryoku wo meguru taiwa," trans. Kenji Kanno, Michel Foucault shikou shusei VII: 1978 Chi/ Shintai, ed. Yasuo Kobayashi (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2000) 47-50; Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, "Passion and Power: An Introduction," Passion and Power: Sexuality in History, eds. Kathy Peiss, Christina Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989) 3-9; Robert A. Padgug, "Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History," Passion and Power: Sexuality in History, eds. Kathy Peiss, Christina Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989) 21-27; John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, "Preface to the Second Edition," preface, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, 2nd ed., by D'Emilio and Freedman (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997) v-vii; John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, introduction, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, 2nd ed., by D'Emilio and Freedman (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997) xi-xvi.

² Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right," Feminist Studies 7. 2 (1981): 206-46.

single set of beliefs and values.”⁵ While Petchesky demonstrates that the New Right is anti-feminist, and subordinates women, Klatch focuses on “the visible presence of women throughout the conservative movement,”⁶ and argues that “right-wing women [are not] a monolithic group, . . . [j]ust as the New Right is not one cohesive movement.”⁷ Klatch characterizes right wing women whom she interviewed as “self-identified and labeled by others as conservative,”⁸ but she introduces the reader to nuances in the movement by separating them into social conservatives and laissez-faire conservatives, and by comparing their approaches to feminist activism. Klatch’s attempt to distinguish between conservative women enables her to characterize social conservative women as “believ[ing] in a strict division of gender roles as decreed by the Scriptures,”⁹ and laissez-faire women as sharing “feminist vision,”¹⁰ including right to abortion.

Sara Diamond’s recent Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right analyzes the Christian Right at the end of the twentieth century.¹¹ Diamond defines supporters of the Christian Right as “hundreds of thousands of average people who pay dues, buy subscriptions, and respond to fund raising letters.”¹² The book discusses Christian institutions and activism, including the Christian Broadcast Network, popular evangelical fiction, magazines, music, Christian interest groups such as Christian Coalition, electoral politics including Patrick Buchanan’s presidential campaigns and

³ Petchesky 206.

⁴ Petchesky 230.

⁵ Rebecca Klatch, “Coalition and Conflict among Women of the New Right,” Journal of Women in Culture and Society 13. 4 (1988): 671-94.

⁶ Klatch 672.

⁷ Klatch 673.

⁸ Klatch 673.

⁹ Klatch 676.

¹⁰ Klatch 681.

¹¹ Sara Diamond, Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right (New York: Guilford, 1998).

¹² Diamond 11.

influence on Republican Party, Christian parents' opposition to sex-education programs and "obscene" library books, opposition to abortion and feminism, and counseling for gays and lesbians.¹³ The book provides readers an image of devout Christians' attempt "to preach the Gospel and to save souls, . . . and to remake contemporary moral culture in the image of Christian Scripture."¹⁴ But who exactly are those Christian conservatives who support those Christian politics? What are the roles of women in Christian politics?

Reading literatures on the Southern Baptist Convention, their political agenda, and the split into moderate and fundamentalist factions, made me extremely curious about ordinary members, particularly women, within Southern Baptist Churches. David T. Morgan's The New Crusades, the New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991 provides a history of the Southern Baptist Convention since the early nineteenth century with emphasis on the conflicts between 1969 and 1979, and after 1979.¹⁵ The book describes the challenges that some members with liberal views faced, particularly seminary professors who denied that the Bible was inerrant.¹⁶ The book also analyzes the fundamentalists' takeover which sponsored resolutions against abortion (except to save the life of the mother), the teaching of secular humanism in public schools, the ordination of women as deacons and ministers, and homosexuality, and pornography. In One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society, Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman argue that this new Southern Baptist creed "involves inerrancy, which means the acceptance of a literal interpretation of the Bible,

¹³ Diamond 12-17.

¹⁴ Diamond 1.

¹⁵ David T. Morgan, The New Crusades, the New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991 (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 1996).

¹⁶ Morgan 30.

as well as an emphasis on an experience of personal conversion.¹⁷ Southern Christianity is emotional, Jesus-centered, and contains a strict moral code.”¹⁸ The Southern Baptist Convention’s opposition to divorce, however, did not diminish the large number of female divorcees in Baptist churches. How, then, do members balance their beliefs and daily experiences?

How exactly do Baptist parents teach sexual morality? One approach is to look at Christian advice literature, such as Christian Sex Education: Parents and Church Leader’s Guide, edited by Jimmy Hester, the Design Editor of the Discipleship and Family Development of the Baptist Sunday School Board.¹⁹ This book contains advice for Christian parents with children from four through their teens. In the introduction, Hester stipulates God’s ideal for sexual relationships within marriage. “God created us male and female, sexual beings . . . Our sexuality is expressed in many ways other than sexual intercourse, but sexual intercourse is an important expression of sexual intimacy and is to be reserved for the one-flesh relationship of marriage . . . (Gen. 1:26-28).”²⁰ The book reveals Christians’ sense of threat. “Sexual activity among children and youth is epidemic . . . The results of this openness and freedom of sexual expression has²¹ resulted in a moral and ethical decline in our time.”²² Hester and Pastor Bill Blackburn, whose article appears in the book, are certain that Christian parents have difficulty in addressing issues of sexuality with their children. Hester writes, “[W]e have not been willing to discuss sexual issues, even with our own children. Often, we may not know how to

¹⁷ Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, One Nation under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society (New York: Harmony, 1993).

¹⁸ Kosmin and Lachman 53-54.

¹⁹ Jimmy Hester, ed., Christian Sex Education: Parents and Church Leader’s Guide (Nashville: Family Touch, 1993).

²⁰ Hester 3.

²¹ The sequence of tenses is as Hester writes.

respond as parents to the openness in our society . . . Sex education should happen at home, although we must admit that most parents feel uncomfortable talking about sex.”²³ Blackburn argues that the sense of invading privacy and embarrassment make it difficult for adults to discuss sexuality. He thinks adults become hesitant to pass on information about sexuality because they lack role models and are afraid that such information prompts youth to experiment.²⁴

Looking at the shift in secular literature on sexuality highlights the challenges that Christian parents and Christian advisors face in combating what they see as sexual immorality in the society. M. E. Melody and Linda M. Peterson’s Teaching America about Sex: Marriage Guides and Sex Manuals from the Late Victorians to Dr. Ruth demonstrates how “the literature . . . [may] advocate less sexual repression, endorse birth control . . . and eventually sanction sexual intercourse within relationships, not merely marriage.”²⁵ Melody and Peterson, in analyzing the media in the 1960s, highlight that “the pill made sexual freedom seem possible in new ways. Sex without the burden of marriage or the responsibility of children seemed possible.”²⁶ They also discuss how AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases ended the sexual revolution.

Two ethnographic projects, including Faye D. Ginsburg’s Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community and Christel Manning’s God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism, helped shape my thesis, although they did not influence my

²² Hester 3.

²³ Hester 3-4.

²⁴ Hester 7.

²⁵ M. E. Melody and Linda M. Peterson, Teaching America about Sex: Marriage Guides and Sex Manuals from the Late Victorians to Dr. Ruth (New York: New York UP, 1999) 5.

²⁶ Melody and Peterson 14.

writing significantly.²⁷ Contested Lives is a study of abortion politics in the United States. In the book, Ginsburg conducted one-on-one interviews with pro-choice and pro-life activists in Fargo, North Dakota. Ginsburg discusses interview participants' conversations and personal experiences as clues to how they became active in abortion grass roots activism. Manning conducted ethnographic research that analyzes ordinary women in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish communities who chose conservative religion. Manning argues that not all conservative women oppose feminism. "Though the conservative resurgence coincides with feminist success in the 1970s, the reason why people turn to conservatism is different in different communities, and conservative religious communities have responded to feminism in different ways."²⁸ Manning further analyzes church women's attempts to understand the problems of abortion and homosexuality. She argues that approaches and responses to such issues differ and depend on religious affiliation.

While Ginsburg and Manning focus on political activism and the opinions of ordinary people, my thesis aims to explicate individual church goers' ideals with regard to teaching sexual morality to their children. Interview participants feel that their teaching is constantly challenged by society and the child's responses. How the participants' own parents raised them also shaped their teaching styles regarding sexuality. Their teachings of sexual morality reflect not only their religious beliefs but also each individual's daily experiences. Analyzing and categorizing my interview participants to represent their political agenda was a challenge.

²⁷ Faye D. Ginsburg, Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community, updated ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998); Christel Manning, God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1999).

The act of speaking about sexuality is in itself a complex and meaningful process. Michel Foucault's works, particularly The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction and "Sexuality and Power," aided me in my research.²⁹

Do the working of power, and in particular those mechanisms that are brought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression? . . . The central issue . . . is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, . . . whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said.³⁰

Foucault proposes that "power is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations," that "power comes from below: that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations," that "there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives," and that "[w]here there is power, there is resistance."³¹ Foucault asks, "[t]o return to sex and the discourse of truth . . . the question that we must address . . . [is] what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses[?]"³²

Foucault argues in "Sexuality and Power" that Christianity brought to the history of sexual morality a new technique that is called pastoral power.³³

The power of the pastor consists precisely in that he has the authority to require the people to do everything necessary for their salvation: . . . each of the actions that one will be able to perform . . . will have to be able to

²⁸ Manning 47.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Power (1978)," trans. Richard A. Lynch, Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Reutridge, 1999).

³⁰ Foucault, History of Sexuality 10-11.

³¹ Foucault, History of Sexuality 94-95.

³² Foucault, History of Sexuality 97.

³³ Foucault, "Sexuality and Power" 121-23.

be known by the pastor . . . in a Christian society, the pastor . . . is he who can demand of others an absolute obedience; . . . He teaches truth, he teaches writing, he teaches morality, he teaches the commandments of God and the commandments of the church . . . The Christian pastor, . . . must know, certainly, everything that his sheep do, . . . he must also know . . . what goes on inside the soul, the heart, the most profound secrets of the individual.³⁴

But is it only religion, and pastor's teachings, that influence Baptist parents' discussions about sexuality with their children? How do religious beliefs and life experiences blend in my interviews with participants?

My research on Baptist parents tried to draw accurate descriptions, and perhaps, find some discrepancies between the practice of ordinary members and the public position of their church. I decided to focus on Baptist churches because the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the nation. Also, Baptist churches play important roles in many African Americans' religious lives.

The project entails interviews with individual church members. The participants numbered fifty, including thirty-seven women and thirteen men, from thirty-eight families. There were nine single participants, including divorced, separated, and unmarried, and the rest were married. The participants' birth years ranged from the late 1930s to the late 1960s. The majority were born in the 1950s and the 1960s, including twenty-eight participants and sixteen, respectively. Five were born in the 1940s and there was only one participant who was born in the 1930s. They were parents with children, including twenty-one early teens, twenty-four mid-teens, eleven late teens, twelve children who were younger than teens, and fifteen who were grown up. The interview was conducted initially with one participant, usually the mother, from each household. But the project expanded to include married couples in cases when participants came to

³⁴ Foucault, "Sexuality and Power" 124-25.

the meeting with their spouses, or when the other partner seemed very interested in participating.

The participants are parents with teenagers, and also members of four Baptist churches in the Greater Williamsburg area.³⁵ The project focused on those parents partly because they proved willing to speak candidly about this very important period in their children's character development. Furthermore, I presumed parents with teenage children grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, and that asking them how they were guided by their parents might reveal generational changes in these attitudes in the United States.

To protect the privacy of the participants, the thesis retains the anonymity of each participant, his or her spouse, and the children. Unless the gender of a child, or specific age of the child, is crucial, the thesis assumes participants have more than one child. However, when it seems important to address the accurate age, the thesis will specify the age. The identity of the churches will also remain anonymous.

The four churches that appear in this thesis are Mt. Holy Church, Mt. Palm Church, New Ark Church, and New Hope Church (all pseudonymous). The first two are predominantly African American, and the other two are white Southern Baptist churches. Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm have long histories. The current membership at Mt. Holy is about 270, down from 400 members in 1956, with the average of 120 at Sunday morning service. The estimated average age of the membership is about 60 years old or more. According to one elderly family, most of the members were originally from Williamsburg until the 1960s, but more people have migrated since then from outside of

³⁵ At one church, I chose to include a participant whose children were in their twenties and thirties, due to the difficulty in interviewing families from her church.

the area.³⁶ Their activities include Sunday service, Sunday school, adult Bible studies, youth Bible studies, and other meetings and functions. According to this elderly family, the style of the service changed from hymns, anthems, and spirituals to gospel and praise songs in the early 1990s. The church is affiliated with the American Baptist Convention, the Tidewater Baptist Association, and the Virginia Baptist General Convention. The present pastor came to the church in the early 1980s.³⁷

Mt. Palm's membership has grown since the 1990s. The number at Sunday attendance, for example, increased from about 40 in the early 1990s to 220 at the time of this research. The current membership is approximate 250. The church covers different age groups. The pastor calls his church "progressive," in that it operates an AIDS ministry, gathers donations for women's shelters, and visits nursing homes. As for the church activities, Sunday school, Bible studies, choir lessons, music lessons, and other meetings are available. The church is affiliated with the Virginia Baptist Association, which has affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention. The pastor has been at this church since the early 1990s.³⁸

New Ark Church and New Hope Church are predominantly white Baptist churches. New Ark was constituted in the mid-1950s. The growth in membership has been dramatic at this church, too. The numbers of the members attending the Sunday worship service decreased from approximate 200 in the 1970s to 30 in the early 1990s. However, the membership rose to 350 in the 1990s, with an average Sunday attendance of 250. The pastor suggests that spiritual hunger has been attracting people. There is a sign-up sheet for, and an information board about, the Promise Keepers. The church is

³⁶ An elderly couple from Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal interview, 27 Mar. 2001.

³⁷ The pastor at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal interview, 28 Feb. 2001.

full of children and teenagers with both parents. Visitors might think they were in a kindergarden, an elementary school, or a high school in Wednesday evenings, and on Sundays. The church emphasizes ministering to young families with children. Along with Sunday services in the morning, and in the evening, Sunday school, Wednesday evening activities, choir lessons, and Bible studies are available. The church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention at the national level, and the Southern Baptist Conservatives, Virginia, at the state level. The church has been a member of the Peninsula Baptist Association (PBA), but it stopped funding the PBA in 2001, because, “the leadership [of the PBA are] becoming liberal, and [moving] away from the Bible.” The pastor has served at this church since the early 1990s.³⁹

New Hope was built in the 1950s. The current membership is about 350, with an average of 125 in the Sunday morning service. Members of age 60 and above constitute an active group in the church. Yet the pastor said in an interview that, “in the past year and a half,” the church is growing through adults in their 30s and 40s. According to the pastor, many of the new members have come through difficulties in life, as for instance, broken marriages or the loss of family members. They try to find stability for their life, and to “get their life straightened out.” Most of them do not have families or extended family in the area. They look to the church for a community, friends, and the people who encourage and influence their life. Sunday morning service, Sunday school, Wednesday activities as well as prayer meetings, Bible studies, choir lessons, bell ringing classes, and aerobics classes are available at this church. The church records that the membership increased to approximate 600 through the 1970s, but drastically declined from the late

³⁸ The pastor at Mt. Palm Church [pseud.], personal interview, 1 Mar. 2001.

³⁹ The pastor at New Ark Church [pseud.], personal interview, 21 Mar. 2001.

1970s until the early 1980s. However, the actual number of active members and its shift is difficult to grasp because the church record excluded members who moved out of the region. After the membership dropped to approximately 300 in the early 1980s, the church is gradually gaining new members. The church is affiliated with the Peninsula Baptist Association, Virginia Baptist General, and the Southern Baptist Convention. The current pastor came to the church in the early 1990s.⁴⁰

I was a black sheep with a touch of whiteness in a herd of God loving lambs. I am Japanese. I am not Christian. I am from a family which practices Buddhism and Shinto. My family and I visit our family grave in a Buddhist temple monthly to clean the yard and pray for the ancestors. We visit the Shinto Shrine periodically. Despite my non-American, non-Christian background, I have probably been exposed to Christianity more than most of the Japanese, having attended Protestant kindergarden, and Christian High School for six years. I have my own Bible in Japanese. Perhaps this strange balance between Christianity and Japanese culture, as well as being a student, might have helped me to blend in the churches. One episode convinces me of this. A pastor asked me over the phone if I was a Christian. It was after I explained my experience at my Christian high school that I heard his approval through his secretary.

I had tremendous difficulty finding Southern Baptist churches that would accept me as a researcher. Hoping to find a white Southern Baptist church member whom I or any of my friends knew, I waited for weeks in vain. Reading the literature on the Southern Baptist Convention's split made me extremely doubtful that I would ever be able to find churches that I could visit. Realizing that I would not get any Baptist family to recommend me, I reluctantly pulled out the Yellow Pages. I practiced the sentences for

⁴⁰ The pastor at New Hope Church [pseud.], personal interview, 13 Mar. 2001.

the first call, over and over again in my room, with my phone sitting in front of me, as if there was someone from the church facing me. How heavy my breath seemed when I pushed the number! Not all churches replied to the messages I left, but thankfully, two Southern Baptist churches responded. To get into the African American churches was as challenging as with the white churches, but I had a few friends who knew of pastors. Two out of three churches to which I inquired responded.

Although all four churches that I visited welcomed me with warm hospitality, there were several occasions during which I felt I was being watched, particularly at New Ark and Mt. Palm. The pastor at New Ark asked me on my second visit if I finished my research, an impossibility given the nature of my research. After listening to my observations about the church, a member at New Ark said, "I like your comment, so far." At Mt. Palm, the pastor asked if he could have a meeting with me to ask about my research, and try my interview first, before he gave me access to his church members. He asked me a lot of questions in the first telephone call and in the first meeting, including: how I found Mt. Palm; which churches I was visiting; what my religious life like; how I chose my program for graduate study; what I studied for my Bachelor's degree; how old I was; how I liked America so far; what impressed me most with American society; what I liked and did not like about America; how many participants I intended to have; how my family is; what my father does; how far my father's workplace is from home; how old he is; how often I get in touch with my family; how I got to know my friends who told me about Mt. Palm; how those friends are; and if they had children, etc., etc.. However difficult my first encounter was, I would like to emphasize that both New Ark and Mt. Palm gave me as great hospitality as any other churches. None of the New Ark

participants neglected appointments with me, and Mt. Palm provided the largest number of participants.

In order to observe as many aspects of the church as possible, and to be familiar with the members, I attended as many activities as possible, including Sunday morning services, Sunday School, Sunday evening services, Wednesday activities, weekday Bible studies, choir practices, deacon's ordination ceremony, Christmas Carol, Easter functions, a fund-raising bowling party, and an overnight women's retreat, to name a few.

Asking the members to give me a ride also helped me to become closer to the members. Half an hour on the way to and from the church allowed me to know people and their children, as well as have the church members know me. The members updated me on what was happening at the church and to the members. Conversation sometimes became so intense that we exchanged our understandings of God and religion. Occasionally, the members would tell me when and why they became Baptists.

The interviews, including the first on values in general, and the second on issues of sexuality, were scattered from November 2000 to June 2001.⁴¹ Taking significant amounts of time with the research probably enabled me to be more familiar and close to the church family. I could see faces in the second interview became more relaxed than they were in the first. One pastor told me, after visiting his church for several months, that I became able to wrap him around my finger. That was the day when I announced to him that I would be focusing on sexuality with my thesis.

The length of each interview depended on the participant's response. Usually it took sometime between half an hour and an hour. Sometimes it took twenty minutes. In other cases, particularly when a couple participated together, the interview might go over

two hours. The first interview results include 187 pages, single spaced with 10 fonts, including 67 pages of handwritten transcription. The transcription of second interviews is in 261 pages, single spaced with 10 fonts.

The location where interviews occurred varied, but more second interviews happened at private settings. The first interviews often took place at a church meeting room, public library, outside bench, or on college campus, because of my inaccessibility to a vehicle. I could occasionally visit houses when there was public transportation, or when I could use my friends' cars. For the second interviews, I tried to visit the participants at home as much as possible, because of the confidentiality required with the discussion about sexuality. If visiting at home did not work, a church room, college class room or participant's office were chosen when there was enough privacy.

With a few exceptions in which participants preferred note taking, all interviews were tape-recorded. One couple preferred note-taking in the first and the second interviews, and two participants avoided tape recording in the second interview.⁴² I offered them a chance to read the full transcription, which enabled them to eliminate misrepresentation.

The project represents more women, in part because I initially tried to interview only women. I then accepted male participants when they were interested in my project or when they seemed approachable. The number of women and men from the four participating churches included ten women and one man from Mt. Holy, ten and six from Mt. Palm, ten and four from New Ark, and seven and two from New Hope, respectively. Also, there were some single parents--divorced, separated, and unmarried--in the sample.

⁴¹ Please see appendix A and B, in pp.105-107, for the interview questions.

There were four single parents from Mt. Holy, three from New Hope, and two from Mt. Palm. Being a female, it might have been easier to become close to female members than to male members. Yet, I have to point out that, in some cases, it was the husband who became interested in participation. Furthermore, some couples shared their opinions so that it seemed natural for them to come to the interview together.

The sampling process was another difficulty. Ministers and deacons introduced me to their church members with teenage children, but getting enough families for my research was a struggle except at New Ark Church. At Mt. Holy and New Hope, a deacon and a minister had to provide me additional names of members with teenage children, including one family whose oldest child was in his/her early teens. There was also a participant whose children were in their twenties and thirties. At New Hope, eight families were the maximum number that I could get, despite the initial goal to gather ten families from each church.

The majority of the participants are active members. I usually saw most of them in the Sunday school, Sunday morning service, and other church functions.

The result from the first interviews on values in general helped me to grasp the characteristics of the participants.⁴³ The members who participated in the interview had a strong belief in God and Jesus Christ. They stated that they abided in the Bible. The majority of them verbalized in the first interview their devotion to God, Jesus, the Bible, or the church.⁴⁴ As the participants put it, they “put God first,”⁴⁵ and “follow what the

⁴² The couple who preferred note-taking throughout was Mt. Palm participants 4h and 4w. The other participants who avoided tape-recording in the interviews on sexuality were Mt. Holy 2, and Mt. Palm 10w.

⁴³ Please see appendix A, in p.105, for the interview questions on values.

⁴⁴ There were nine from Mt. Holy, five from New Hope, and eight each from Mt. Palm and New Ark.

⁴⁵ New Ark [pseud.] participant 2, personal interview, 21 Feb. 2001.

Bible says.”⁴⁶ One couple, who were impressed at how the Bible applied to every aspect of their life, pointed out that the Bible talks about marriage, relationships, a husband and a wife, parents and kids, and finances.⁴⁷ Another participant did not know how she would have gotten through her life without a firm belief in God.⁴⁸ “Church is extremely important.”⁴⁹ For the participants, God and the Bible were cornerstones of their lives.⁵⁰

The participants held that they raised their children according to the Bible, and by living in the way the Bible teaches. They trained up their children in the way that they should go.⁵¹ They said that the Bible sets limits to behavior and action, but to achieve a Christian life in the children, parents know that they have to be good role models for the children. Some participants answered that they taught by example.⁵²

The participants, both black and white, tried to instill similar characteristics in their children, yet some characteristics differed by race. Characteristics that participants hoped their child to attain, regardless of race, included being Christian, trustful, honest, and moral. Some parents wished their children to be trustful and honest.⁵³ Others verbalized their wishes for their children to be morally upright.⁵⁴ Other characteristics that from one to four participants in each church encouraged included withstanding peer

⁴⁶ New Ark 7w, personal interview, 15 Mar. 2001.

⁴⁷ New Ark 3h and 3w, personal interview, 26 Feb. 2001.

⁴⁸ Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 2, personal interview, 15 Nov. 2000.

⁴⁹ Mt. Holy participant 10, personal interview, 9 Feb. 2001.

⁵⁰ More members at New Ark--nine families--mentioned that they shared the same belief with the spouse, while five from Mt. Holy, and two each from New Hope and Mt. Palm verbalized shared beliefs between a husband and a wife. Significant differences between races did not stand out except one comment by a participant from Mt. Holy. According to this participant, belief empowered her to live as an African American. She answered that, “if you didn’t have that, you’ll be hopeless.” Mt. Holy participant 3, personal interview, 14 Nov. 2000.

⁵¹ Participants referred to Prov. 22.6 in the Bible.

⁵² There were five participants from Mt. Holy, seven each from Mt. Palm, New Ark, and New Hope.

⁵³ There were six participants from New Ark, five from Mt. Palm, four from Mt. Holy, and two from New Hope.

⁵⁴ There were five participants from New Ark, four from Mt. Holy, three from Mt. Palm, and two from New Hope.

pressure, being with good people, being well mannered, responsible, disciplined, and independent, attaining integrity and responsibility, being respectful of authority, parents, family members and elderly people, and abstaining from sexual activity until marriage.

The values that more black parents pointed out were caring, respect for others, belief in one's self and education. Fourteen African American parents emphasized respect to others compared to six parents among their white counterparts. Self-affirmation was heard from ten black parents, while the same was heard from only two in white churches. Four black participants mentioned the importance of education while no white parents referred to it.

The striking conclusion from the first interviews was that the participants tried to have communication with their children. Nine from Mt. Holy, eight from Mt. Palm, six from New Hope, and five from New Ark said that they "discuss anything" openly and honestly with their children. Parents took a lot of time to explain their opinions. Some related that their conversation included issues of sexuality.

New Hope participant 3: "We discuss a lot of aspects of the Bible . . . I'm very open and honest with my children, . . . [I tell] exactly what I expect, and exactly what I hope they don't do, and the consequences. Hopefully, they can come to me with any questions they have . . . I think if you hide things from them, especially for sexual influence, if you [say], "Stay away until you're older," then they become more curious. If you make it forbidden, then the child is gonna do it."⁵⁵

Mt. Holy 9: "children *have* to make decisions at an early age, now, . . . I didn't have to decide until I was twenty-one or eighteen . . . So I have to be willing to discuss that with her. I have to keep the communication open so that she can feel comfortable coming to me and tell me . . . Just to be more approachable . . . We talk about religion, we talk about death, . . . family, . . . sex, . . . dating, . . . relationship, . . . we talk about everything!"⁵⁶

⁵⁵ New Hope [pseud.] participant 3, personal interview, 11 Nov. 2000.

⁵⁶ Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 9, personal interview, 15 Nov. 2000.

These parents feel that their children's access to them is significantly different than their access to their own parents:

New Ark 1: "That [sex] wasn't issue when we were growing up, and our parents didn't talk about a lot of things like that, because it was always a private issue . . . I'm a little bit more open than they were."⁵⁷

Mt. Holy 6: "You didn't talk about everything . . . especially anything of sexual nature. You just never talked about it with your parents . . . You didn't question . . . [Now,] children are able to ask questions, . . . I do try to encourage that."⁵⁸

Those comments I heard in the first interviews led me to focus on sexual morality. All participants, except two, continued participation. The two who declined to participate in the second interview are from Mt. Palm. One is a single mother,⁵⁹ and the other is a father whose wife proceeded to the second interview.⁶⁰

The numbers in the quotations signify individual households. The alphabets in the quotations from interviews--f, m, w, and h--stand for female participants, male participants, wives and husbands, respectively. Participants with these letters are married, and their spouses participated in the project. The participants with "f" and "m" participated separately, while those with "w" and "h" met the researchers as a couple. The italics that appear in the quotations represent apparent stress in a participant's voice. Responses which are transcribed in capital letters indicate answers stated in a more forceful voice.

⁵⁷ New Ark [pseud.] participant 1, personal interview, 1 Mar. 2001.

⁵⁸ Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 6, personal interview, 9 Dec. 2000.

⁵⁹ She was the only participant that I failed to inform that the second interview would be on the issues of sexuality in the call when I asked for her participation. Although I could tell her the content of the second interview before the scheduled date, perhaps she might have felt uncomfortable seeing me in a private meeting. She said she could answer my questions on sexuality if they were in a questionnaire sheet.

⁶⁰ This participant was one of the male parents who became more interested in my research than their wives. He could not participate in the interview because of the tight schedule.

CHAPTER I

BAPTIST PARENTS TEACH SEXUALITY

Chapter I focuses on similarities among black and white participants in teaching sexual morality to their children, although there sometimes appeared tendencies that were characteristic of one church or the other. There are four sections in this chapter. One is on gender. The interview responses from the participants from all churches indicate that, while the ideal approach to teach sexuality is the same for boys and girls, some participants separated discussion of male aggression and female's equation of love and sex. Girls were to be chaste, and not to wear provocative clothes, while boys were to respect women. Also, participants tended to teach sexual morality to a child of the same sex. The second similarity that interview results indicated was that parents were forced to discuss issues of sexuality through several channels. Molestation and rape cases drove parents to explain sexual assaults, including rape, date rape, and molestation, and how to prevent them. Such fear made some parents with daughters restrict dating. Peer pressures from non-Christians and classmates who were sexually active also intensified a sense of threat for the participants to discuss sexual morality. The media sent sexual content to the home, forcing parents to address certain issues. The Clinton scandal, in particular, prompted parents to discuss oral sex with their children. Indeed, those fears made parents restrict their children's actions. Some gave dating instructions. Others checked their children's whereabouts, access to driver's licenses, and relationships with peers. Several

parents restricted children's access to the media. Negative consequences of sexual activities, including AIDS, venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancy, and hindrance to future education and career also motivated parents to talk about sexuality with their children. Furthermore, sex education at school and children's questions brought about discussion at home. The third commonality that the participants had was that the Bible was their teaching standard. The use of the Bible was a frequent practice of Baptist parents in discussing sexual morality. For example, they described abstinence until marriage as "biblical." They said that one's body is a "temple of God." The fourth similarity is that the participants taught sexual morality by positive and negative examples. Lastly, participants tried not to avoid discussing issues of sexuality and create levels of comfort. The majority of the participants, who grew up in the 1960s and the 1970s, made themselves more accessible than their own parents. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the limited information that they obtained from their own parents. They were satisfied that the church has become more open in discussing issues of sexuality.¹

Interview results suggest that the majority of parents stressed the importance of abstinence until marriage for both genders, while their expectations for boys and girls were different. Parents also tended to discuss issues of sexuality to a child of their own sex.

When asked if the participants taught a son and a daughter in a same manner, many parents answered that they either taught or would teach the same to a boy and a

¹ The interview questions on sexuality appear in appendix B, in pp.105-107.

girl.² The majority of them mentioned that for both sexes, the basic rule was to stay away from premarital sex.

Mt. Holy participant 5: "It wouldn't be any different, 'cause they have to know the same thing . . . your body might be different, but you still have to have the same knowledge."³

Several participants taught boys and girls together in a same setting, or did not hide a conversation with one child from another child of the opposite gender.⁴

New Hope 7: "I usually discuss sex with them together. Amm, . . . they come to me separately, of course, but if it's a big topic that we're discussing, like homosexuality, or abortion, talking about going into puberty, body hair, periods, all that wonderful stuff. We talked about that together. . . . My son doesn't need to be any more worldly than my daughter does. And they need to have the same knowledge to be able to be strong against things."⁵

The Bible seemed to provide thorough teachings of abstinence for both boys and girls. A few participants explicitly commented that the Bible does not distinguish between males and females in sustaining sexual abstinence until marriage.⁶

New Ark 7w: "Oh, yeah, exactly, because God's word is, you know, it's the same." / 7h: ". . . and if we had a son, . . . I would be the one to, to get, give him the explicit, ahaha, details, but . . . the actual information would be the same, that the teaching would be the same. I mean, . . . there's no two standards, you know, standard of pure conduct for a woman and a different standard for, for a man . . . they're the same . . . but you know, it was, ammm, society sort of view, you know, that the woman should remain pure, but if a . . . you know, if a, if a young boy . . . violates [remaining pure], then it's just isn't, not quite as bad, or not as wrong . . . that's not what the Bible teaches it all, it's the same for both of us."⁷

Several participants' responses in the interview suggested that girls' aggression motivate them to teach boys and girls in the same manner. They expressed concerns

² There were nine participants from New Hope Church [pseud.] including one couple, eight from Mt. Palm Church [pseud.], six from Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], and five from New Ark Church [pseud.].

³ Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

⁴ New Hope had two participants, while Mt. Holy and New Ark had one participant each.

⁵ New Hope [pseud.] participant 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

⁶ One participant was from New Ark, and the other was from Mt. Palm.

about sexually aggressive girls that they did not see when they were growing up.⁸ One Mt. Holy participant commented that girls approaching her son “blows her away.”⁹

A very few participants acknowledged that the sexual urges of a girl are as great as a boy is expected to have.¹⁰

New Ark 10f: “I think . . . I grew up, amm, thinking that it was mostly the boys that had those feelings, you know, . . . boys have the more physical feelings . . . but girls are dealing with it, just as much as emotionally.”¹¹

Mt. Palm 7: “[My husband said, when our son had sex in his early teens,] ‘That’s a man’s thing.’ . . . [I said] ‘You’re just as worse as he is.’ . . . ‘Same thing with your daughter,’ I said, . . . ‘But what does she do? Become of an age . . . there’s no different.’ I said, ‘your son satisfied . . . why can’t she?’ . . . He [my husband]’s telling her you can’t have a boyfriend . . . I said, ‘why?’ ‘cause your son can do this . . . and your daughter can’t.’ ‘She’s a female,’ I said, ‘eh? That was a female your, your son had sex with.’ ‘That was just a wild child.’ . . . I said, ‘you [my husband]’re gonna stand there and tell me that she can’t have sex, but your son can.’ I said, ‘that’s not right. She’s gonna want to experiment just like he did.’ I said, ‘now, you can’t let one and not let the other . . . your daughter will feel the same way as your son.’”¹²

Yet, there seemed to be some discrepancies in teaching sexual morality in the “same” manner when looking at how participants perceive gender. Many parents, including nine who previously said they provided the same teachings, answered that they taught boys and girls differently because male and female perspectives are different.¹³ Some of the participants simply said it was not possible to discuss sexuality in the same manner for a boy and a girl. Others pointed out different expectations and stereotypes for

⁷ New Ark [pseud.] participants 7w and 7h, personal interview, 8 May 2001.

⁸ There were two participants from New Hope, and one each from New Ark, Mt. Holy, and Mt. Palm.

⁹ Mt. Holy 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰ One was from Mt. Palm, and the other one was from New Ark.

¹¹ New Ark 10f, personal interview, 1 May 2001.

¹² Mt. Palm [pseud.] participant 7, personal interview, 30 Apr. 2001.

¹³ Twenty participants answered that they would teach boys and girls differently. There were seven including a couple from Mt. Holy, six including a couple from Mt. Palm, four from New Hope, and three from New Ark. Among them, there were nine participants who provided contradictory responses that they

boys and girls. Those participants answered that men were aggressive in expressing sexual feelings. Boys might pursue sex to fulfill their sexual urges, while girls equate love with sex but were expected to be chaste.¹⁴

New Hope 7: "The rules are different for boys and girls, they always have been in any culture, men are much more free to express their sexuality than women are. Women are supposed to be chaste, and guys can sleep with whatever they want."¹⁵

Mt. Holy 7: "Young men are more interested in sex . . . young women do what to please the young men . . . young women want a commitment."¹⁶

Different expectations for boys and girls also appeared in the ways in which parents controlled boys' and girls' sexual feelings. Some parents stated that they restricted girls' clothing,¹⁷ while requiring boys not to pressure girls to engage in sexual relationships, but to respect them.¹⁸

New Hope 3: "I don't think that she should be dressing in ways that make it look like she's sexually active, or that she wants to be sexually active, because even if she *doesn't*, . . . she's giving those signals, and those ideas."¹⁹

Mt. Palm 7: "respect the woman at all times . . . sexual intercourse with a person is with somebody in love . . . when you have sex with someone, it's supposed to be because you love this person . . . that you want to be with."²⁰

Controlling boys' and girls' sexual feelings by different standards suggested that virtuous girls were to have final responsibility for preventing premarital sex. Although

would teach boys and the girls in the "same" manner. Those participants included four from New Hope, three from Mt. Palm, and two from Mt. Holy.

¹⁴ Five participants, including two each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and one from Mt. Palm, answered that men were aggressive. Three participants, including two from Mt. Palm and one from Mt. Holy, stated that women equated love with sex while men did not.

¹⁵ New Hope 7, personal interview, 4 May 2001

¹⁶ Mt. Holy 7, personal interview, 17 Apr. 2001.

¹⁷ There were five participants from New Ark, including one couple, and two each from New Hope and Mt. Palm.

¹⁸ There were three participants from Mt. Palm, two each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and one from New Ark.

¹⁹ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

some participants acknowledged that girls, too, have sexual feelings, directing girls not to wear provocative clothes suggested that virtuous girls were expected to stop boys' advances. Many parents told their sons not to put pressure on girls, but they did not comment in the interviews about how boys could avoid engaging in sexual relationships with promiscuous girls, and with those who choose to wear short skirts and fitted shirts.

The wives and husbands that participated in the project shared or divided teaching sexual morality. Although conflicting answers and single mothers' comments made it difficult to analyze the roles of husbands and wives, the interview results suggested that the participants were more likely to teach sexual morality to a child of their own sex. The majority of all churches except at New Hope answered that they taught sexual morality to a child of the same sex.²¹

Some participants provided conflicting answers about sharing teachings of sexual morality with their partners. Many participants, particularly at New Ark, mentioned that whichever parent is available would answer a child's question.²² However, some of them, while answering that whoever was around taught the child, also commented that they tend to teach a child of the same sex.²³ Those parents tried not to avoid children's questions, while dividing mothers' and fathers' roles in teaching about physical differences and gender perspectives.

The second similarity among Baptist parents is that a sense of threat and fear pressured them to discuss sexuality with their children. One fear involved rape and

²⁰ Mt. Palm 7, personal interview, 30 Apr. 2001.

²¹ There were eight participants including a couple from New Ark, eight including two couples from Mt. Palm, seven from Mt. Holy, and three from New Hope.

²² There were seven participants including one couple from New Ark, three each from Mt. Palm and New Hope, and one from Mt. Holy.

²³ There were five parents including a couple at New Ark, and one at Mt. Palm.

molestation. One parent who had sons and daughters answered that she discussed sexual issues with the children when they heard about sexual assault cases.

New Hope 3: "I don't always wait till they ask. Sometimes there're situations that I read about in the paper. For example, we had a man that lived across the street, who was a child molester, and it's gone, he's gone. But this subject came up. And everybody was worried. I didn't wait for the children to come ask me. I sat them down, and I explained to them, what sexual molestation is, ammm, I explained to them good touching, bad touching."²⁴

When asked the appropriate age for teaching sexual morality, participants commented on the fear of sexual molestation, and how they were driven to speak about sex with the children. The majority of the participants from every church answered that whenever the child was able to comprehend was the time to start.²⁵ Some parents said it was best to start discussing sexuality around puberty or when the child went to middle school.²⁶ Others answered that they started teaching at a very early age, sometimes as early as three to five years of age.²⁷ No matter what the child's age, however, fear of sexual assault drove many conversations. Some parents pointed out that they had to teach good and bad touches to avoid sexual molestation.²⁸ Several participants referred to private parts and molestation, and how to distinguish good and bad touches.²⁹

New Hope 3: "I explained to them, what sexual molestation is, ammm, I explained to them good touching, bad touching. Like it's okay to hug me, and to hug grandma, and you know, pat on their back, . . . but anything that they're uncomfortable with, whether the way a person speaks to them, whether the way a person may touch them, that they are to come to me, *immediately*. . . . Even one of my daughter's friends was here, . . . and I just brought them all here, and sat them down . . . I don't want you . . . in

²⁴ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

²⁵ There were eight participants from Mt. Holy, eight including one couple from Mt. Palm, seven including one couple from New Ark, and five from New Hope.

²⁶ There were five participants from New Ark, four from Mt. Palm, and two each from Mt. Holy and New Hope.

²⁷ There were four participants from Mt. Palm, three from Mt. Holy, and one from New Ark.

²⁸ There were two participants from Mt. Holy, and one each from Mt. Palm and New Ark.

²⁹ There were two participants from New Hope, one each from Mt. Holy, Mt. Palm, and New Ark.

fear, but to be cautious of people that you don't know, and to be *very* aware of your body, and it's yours. And make a zone, around your body. Because it IS yours. And keep, you know, anything uncomfortable right from you. Even somebody standing too close that you don't feel comfortable, back up. . . . another thing that I have taught my older step daughter, a lot of times, there are men that just want to hug you, because they wanna rub against you. Amm, if you feel that the person is doing that, if you caNNOT avoid hugging them, sometimes, switch your arm up in front of you. They can't get close to you then. And just hug, and pat with one arm and get away from there as soon as you can. And it's the technique that I think really, really works. Especially with teenagers."³⁰

Date rape was another fear that led participants to discuss sexuality with their children. Some parent with daughters answered that they allowed dating only after a certain age, and that their daughters could call their parents anytime during a date or a party when they become uncomfortable.

Mt. Palm 7: "Don't put yourself in a predicament where this guy wants to have sex with you . . . if he's going to force himself on you, no, no, no, no, no, . . . scream, I said. Somebody will hear you scream . . . going to somebody's house? No. That's a no, no. . . . You got the cellular phone, use it . . . dial 911 . . . I said, 'I've showed you how to hit a person . . . your fists are just as big as your daddy's.'"³¹

Peer pressure was another concern that Baptist parents pointed out. Some participants from all four churches expressed such concerns,³² but the content of the "peer pressure" that the participants thought of had two variations. One was influence from "non-Christians." Another was classmates, who engaged in sexual activity by their mid-teens, an influence which the participants had not had to deal with until they were out of puberty.

New Hope 8w: "Your friends may make fun of you, may call you a baby or sissy, or chicken or whatever, but you still need to stand up for what

³⁰ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

³¹ Mt. Palm 7, personal interview, 30 Apr. 2001.

³² New Ark had six participants while New Hope had one, and the black churches had four parents each.

you believe in and . . . you don't need to be participating . . . [in] the world, and our family is different."³³

Mt. Holy 6: "It's . . . very difficult for him [my son] to know what's right, and what's popular with his friends, so that's become a challenge . . . his friends talk too much . . . too grown."³⁴

New Hope had only one participant who mentioned peer pressure as a threat, compared to six parents at New Ark, and four each at the black churches. Perhaps, New Hope had a belief to interact with "the world" outside of Christian communities. I heard some New Hope members say that they did not shy away from the society because they thought "Christ worked with the public."³⁵ This belief might have trickled down from their pastor who also had the same approach.

Parents from all churches recognized more pressure in young people to have sex, or know about it at an early age.³⁶ They apparently tried to help their children resist pressures from society and their peers.

Mt. Palm 3: "We were raised to marry before children, even before sex . . . I think NOW, the society says, 'practice SAFE sex,' as opposed to no sex . . . they [my children]'re challenged outside with so many issues."³⁷

New Hope 8w: "When I was a teenager, there was not as much immorality in the world . . . I mean, I grew up in . . . the loving sixties and seventies, you know, haha, and, and, but still it, . . . I don't know, just, it's scary, and I guess scarier now to me, because I'm the adult and I have the child."³⁸

Both black and white Baptist participants felt threatened by sexual images in the media that they did not see when they were young. Many parents from all four churches expressed concerns about their children's exposure to television, movies, radio, news,

³³ New Hope 8w, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001

³⁴ Mt. Holy 6, personal interview, 16 Apr. 2001.

³⁵ New Hope 7, personal interview on values in general, 9 Nov. 2000.

³⁶ Six participants were from New Hope, four from Mt. Holy, and three each from New Ark and Mt. Palm.

³⁷ Mt. Palm 3, personal interview, 15 June 2001.

³⁸ New Hope 8w, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

commercials, music, certain types of dance, books, magazines, video games, and computers.³⁹

Mt. Holy 4: “Kids are MUCH more aware of and more informed about sexual behavior and sexual matters and issues and all those sort of thing . . . Media is full of sexual content.”⁴⁰

New Hope 7: “Everything today is about sex. The music, clothes, what’s on television, what’s in the movies, everything is about sex . . . and expressing sexual desire . . . when I was growing up, it was not as . . . obvious as it is now.”⁴¹

Also, the Clinton scandal forced some parents to discuss oral sex.⁴² Although some did not want to talk about oral sex, others welcomed that the scandal brought about discussion at home with the children.

New Ark 4: “President Clinton . . . provided an opportunity . . . we probably would not have discussed when she was that young, but she wanted to know. It was best to go ahead and discuss the issues right there.”⁴³

New Hope 3: “[We discuss] what oral sex is. That was something, thank you President Clinton!, brought into the newspapers, . . . I explained it to them, it’s, you know, with their mouth, and what they do, and of course, they were like, ‘oohohoh,’ and they wanted to know *why*, and I tried to explain that it’s a sensation that they enjoy, but it is certainly not something for them, amm, they shouldn’t be experimenting with anything. . . . But those are, you know, things you don’t wanna make it so forbidden that they’re curious, and wanna try, . . . hopefully they’ll stay away, at least until they *do* find somebody they love.”⁴⁴

The threat that Baptist parents felt from society, linked with their own experiences as well as those of their friends, relatives, and families, drove the participants to restrict

³⁹ There were six participants each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and five each from New Ark and Mt. Palm.

⁴⁰ Mt. Holy 4, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

⁴¹ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

⁴² There were three participants from Mt. Holy, two each from New Ark and New Hope, and one from Mt. Palm.

⁴³ New Ark 4, personal interview, 22 Apr. 2001.

⁴⁴ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

their children's action and behavior, although they said it is challenging to instill Christian values in the society they live in. One of the ways they did this was to restrict dating. Those dating restrictions that participants imposed on their children focused on how to control sexual urges and feelings. About half of participants from each church had dating restrictions and instructions.⁴⁵ Many participants held that they told their children to stay away from situations in which they might be tempted to become sexually active.⁴⁶

New Hope 7: "Holding hands can be really nice, you know, it's very, and hugs are not a bad thing, they're not a bad thing, amm, kissing, well, there're different types of kissing, you know, they're there's the quick pat on the cheek, there's the quick kissing on the lips, and then there is the French kiss, that deep passionate kiss, you don't wanna go there, not yet, you don't wanna, because when you start doing that, then, more personal touches . . . become a part of that. . . . 'No' is 'no,' . . . and that he should respect that . . . if he doesn't . . . respect you for that, then that is not somebody you need to be with. And I tell my son the same thing . . . when a girl tells you 'no,' that means 'no.' . . . I don't let my children amm, date yet."⁴⁷

New Ark 10f: "Once he does [drives], to make sure that he has plans for the evening . . . so that there's no question about what they're gonna do . . . might end up alone some place where they shouldn't be . . . being with a group of people, instead of just being my son and his girlfriend."⁴⁸

In addition to dating restrictions, some parents also restricted their children's relation with peers, children's whereabouts, and driver's license.⁴⁹

Mt. Holy 9: "Where're you going? . . . Where [do] they live? . . . You have to [be] familiar with where your child goes . . . you have to DIScourage some behaviors."⁵⁰

⁴⁵ There were six parents each from Mt. Palm and New Hope, five from New Ark, and four from Mt. Holy.

⁴⁶ There were six participants from New Hope, four each from Mt. Palm and New Ark, and three from Mt. Holy.

⁴⁷ New Hope 7, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

⁴⁸ New Ark 10f, personal interview, 1 May 2001.

⁴⁹ There were three participants each from New Ark and New Hope, and two each from Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm.

⁵⁰ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

New Ark 3w: “Not having your kids at home by themselves . . . they don’t have the mental capacity . . . at least a year later than their friends . . . won’t be riding with other kids . . . until seventeen.”⁵¹

Some participants from all churches except Mt. Holy stated that they restricted the child’s access to media.⁵²

Mt. Palm 5m: “[I teach sexual morality] by not allow[ing] them to watch sexu, sexually explicit movies, and music.”⁵³

New Hope 6: “I wouldn’t let them go to the movies and see it, but we’ve rented [one] we’ve watched them together, so their curiosity is satisfied.”⁵⁴

Negative consequences of being engaged in premarital relationships also appeared to drive participants to discuss sexuality with their children. Those consequences included AIDS, pregnancy, abortion, and single parenthood. The majority of the participants pointed out repercussions including unwanted pregnancy, birth defects, sexually transmitted diseases particularly AIDS, and hindrance to future education and career.⁵⁵

Mt. Holy 4: “Then, of course, we had the Sex Revolution by the time I was in the college. All kinds of things were happening. But then we weren’t dealing with those diseases, AIDS, you know, . . . was not prevalent at that time. . . . Now, I told my daughter, I said, “What is the worst thing that could happen to you if you have premarital sex?” She said, “I think it’s pregnant,” I said, “No, no, no, no. That’s not the worst thing. . . . You could get AIDS, and you can die.” I said, “IF you got pregnant, we work through out. . . . But if you got AIDS, that is the end of it.” . . . Those are the kind of discussions we have.”⁵⁶

Sex education at public schools prompted parents to discuss sex and sexuality because of various reasons. Some wanted to provide sexual morality before or when a

⁵¹ New Ark 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

⁵² There were four participants from New Hope, another four including two couples from Mt. Palm, and three from New Ark.

⁵³ Mt. Palm 5m, personal interview, 25 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁴ New Hope 6, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁵ There were twenty-four parents including eight from Mt. Holy, six from Mt. Palm, and five each from New Ark and New Hope.

child started taking Family Life and Sex Education classes. Others said health class and pregnancy prompted questions from children and therefore, they discussed intercourse and sex and issues of sexuality. With notable exceptions, it appeared from the interviews that many parents liked for schools to be part of sex education.⁵⁷

Mt. Holy 10: "She [my daughter] comes home, talking about a lot of things, that the other kids say . . . things they read in the newspaper, and I think I sort of take it from that angle, and we will talk about. . . . 'Is this right? Is this wrong?' . . . I always ask what they talked about in school . . . in Family Life in human sexuality . . . it's easier to take things that are actually happening instead of an artificial situation where I sit her down."⁵⁸

New Hope 7: "We had the big talk . . . about sexual intercourse, . . . /Q[researcher]: "How old were they then?" / New Hope 7: "Ten, ten, ten or eleven." /Q: "And did you talk to them what the sexual intercourse is?" / New Hope 7: "Yeah, yeah! Yeah, well, because, 'cause, okay, when they were at school, they saw a movie, about sperm and the egg, and how they meet. But they never wanted to talk about, how, how the sperm and egg meet. You know. How does, how does that action happen. It's not like it floats through the air, that's how it happens. So there's no that mystery that we're talking about. So you have to talk about that, that penis and the vagina meet. That kind of thing. And that, that's what sex is. That, that kind of thing. That's not where you wanna go. So, yeah, you have to. 'Cause they give them so much information, but they don't give them the whole package, and then there is, well, how does that happen? How does that sperm from a guy get to the egg in the girl, and if you don't tell them, then, they're making things up. You know? That kind of thing. So, you wanted to, so, yeah, I, I did explain to them." /Q: "I had the same question!" / New Hope 7: "Yeah, how does that get from this point and to that point? And, you know, don't give them the little bit of information, if you're gonna tell them, tell them! So that they don't have any questions."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Mt. Holy participant 4, personal interview about values in general, 8 Dec. 2000.

⁵⁷ A majority of the parents at New Ark did not agree that schools should be involved in these matters. Comparisons between races and churches regarding approaches to sex education at public schools appear in pp. 75-79, in Chapter II.

⁵⁸ Mt. Holy 10, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁹ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001

Inquisitive children often moved parents to have frank discussions about sexuality. Many parents from all churches answered that they seized the opportunity to talk when questions come up.⁶⁰

New Ark 1: "Sometimes parents were, kind of forced to talk about those issues with our children even if we don't think we're ready for it . . . for what they hear in the school, . . . I don't introduce things that they haven't heard of or don't talk about, but if they wanna ask a question, then I am more than willing to talk to them."⁶¹

The participants answered that the questions which their children had asked were about the distinction between acceptable and inappropriate behavior in dating, erection, period, sexual feeling, premarital sex, and where babies come from.

New Hope 7: "the kissing, the touching, that kind of thing, . . . they wanna know, where do you stop, when does it become a bad thing, when does it, is it a bad thing? . . . where the babies come from."⁶²

In summary, the second similarity among participants was that their sense of fear, in terms of sexual assault, children's peer pressures, media influence, and negative consequences of premarital sex, as well as sex education at schools and children's inquisition drove participants to discuss issues of sexuality. Parents also restricted their children's actions by providing dating instructions, and controlling media access, children's location, and relationships with their peers.

The third commonality among Baptist parents was their emphasis on the Bible. The Bible was a guide for Baptist parents of both races in teaching sexual morality to their children, although the use of the Bible in teaching sexual morality was more

⁶⁰ There were six participants from New Ark, five each from New Hope and Mt. Holy, and three from Mt. Palm.

⁶¹ New Ark 1, personal interview, 23 Apr. 2001.

⁶² New Hope 7, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

frequent with participants from New Ark than the other three churches.⁶³ Many parents from all churches answered that the Bible was the standard in their teaching, and that it enabled them to know that they were teaching in a right manner.⁶⁴

Mt. Palm 3: "I try to instill in my children, that whenever you have a situation that you don't understand, and you can't come to mom and dad, you look up. . . . He'll bring answers . . . read the word, ask God for guidance if you don't understand."⁶⁵

New Hope 8w: "You live what the Bible says, . . . the Bible gives me strength to know I'm doing the right thing."⁶⁶

Furthermore, four parents who were from white churches and Mt. Palm referred to the body as a "temple of God" that you had to respect, as it was created in the image of God.⁶⁷

New Hope 7: "God made the body, ammm, and the body is . . . is, is like a temple, and you're supposed to respect your body, because it is a gift from God. . . . Our bodies are made in God's image, and they're given to us to respect, and we're supposed to respect them like God wants, intended us to."⁶⁸

Parents supported their teaching of sexual morality, in particular, abstinence until marriage, by encouraging the child to respect their body and that of the partner. Some parents referred to self-esteem and respect for their partner's body.⁶⁹

Mt. Holy 6: "[I teach my son] how to respect women, girls . . . you don't have to BE everybody else . . . you don't touch ladies . . . certain areas of their body . . . don't talk in certain ways . . . hopefully . . . [he] find[s] a young lady who appreciates that kind of respect."⁷⁰

⁶³ There were six participants each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and five from Palm church, while New Ark had eleven participants.

⁶⁴ There were seven participants from New Ark, six from Mt. Holy, five from Mt. Palm, and three from New Hope.

⁶⁵ Mt. Palm 3, personal interview, 15 June 2001.

⁶⁶ New Hope 8w, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

⁶⁷ New Ark had two participants, while Mt. Palm and New Hope had one participant each.

⁶⁸ New Hope 7, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

⁶⁹ There were four participants from Mt. Palm, three from Mt. Holy, and one each from New Ark and New Hope.

⁷⁰ Mt. Holy 6, personal interview, 16 Apr. 2001.

The fourth characteristic that the interview results highlighted was that participants taught sexual morality by positive and negative examples. Many parents answered that they taught sexual morality by example.⁷¹ Some of them were careful not to contradict their actions and their teaching.

New Hope 4: "We can say one thing, but if you're all doing something that is opposite of what we're telling our children, they're not gonna listen to what we say, they're gonna do what we do. And I think you have to be REALLY careful about that."⁷²

A minority stated that they believe displaying affection to their spouse was a healthy way to show their child an appropriate and ideal relationship in marriage.⁷³

Mt. Holy 6: "They see mommy and daddy kiss, hello, we know we kiss goodbye, and they know that that's a formal love."⁷⁴

New Ark 3w: "It's important for young people to see you as a married couple, enjoying each other sexually, . . . they need to know that you have sex. . . . [Sex is] part of a healthy marriage . . . they need to see you hug each other, hold hands, and kiss . . . so it is something that they're going to get to enjoy, it's not like that you know, forbidden fruit."⁷⁵

Three mothers who were single, or had been single, felt that it was not appropriate to display affection with their boyfriends in front of the child.

Mt. Palm 3: "I've been divorced . . . separated [for some years]. . . . *I never displayed a man* in my home, before my children. Never. They have never! . . . seeing a man, stay here, or even, take company . . . because I don't think it's appropriate. I think that sends a message that's not appropriate . . . so set the example."⁷⁶

New Hope 3: "I've been a single parent, . . . and I would never, even when I was dating my husband, you know, he might come for dinner, but he

⁷¹ There were five participants from New Ark, four from Mt. Holy, three from New Hope, and two from Mt. Palm.

⁷² New Hope 4, personal interview, 17 Apr. 2001.

⁷³ There were two participants from New Ark, and one each from other three churches.

⁷⁴ Mt. Holy 6, personal interview, 16 Apr. 2001.

⁷⁵ New Ark 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

⁷⁶ Mt. Palm 3, personal interview, 15 June 2001.

leaves while they're still awake, you know, not after they go to bed, so they can see that he goes home. So you have to set an example.”⁷⁷

Using bad examples seemed to be a way for participants to instill fear in their children. Some parents answered that they talked about their own mistakes as well as those of their friends, relatives, and neighbors.⁷⁸

New Hope 6: “I’ve always been really open with my children as far as mistakes that I made, . . . and hoping that they’ll avoid some of the same ones . . . very open, lots of conversations.”⁷⁹

The last similarity among the interview respondents was that almost all had open conversations with their children about sexuality.⁸⁰ One participant from each church stated that she did not tell her children that babies came from cabbage patches, or that storks brought the babies. The majority of the participants answered that they did not avoid speaking openly about sexuality with their children.⁸¹ A few answered that discussion reduced curiosity, while others preferred to discuss information and morality before someone else influenced their child.

Mt. Holy 4: “We do not talk about babies being found at a cabbage patch. . . when she was very young, I had literature that she read and . . . we talked about it . . . extremely explicit, . . . very open and candid about sexuality . . . kids are MUCH more . . . informed about sexual behavior . . . and so, in order to amm, amm, communicate with your child, . . . you have to be more open . . . I prefer to be that way so that there won’t be any misunderstandings.”⁸²

New Ark 3h: “We’re very open with kids . . . when my three year old comes to us, and says that her vagina hurts . . . we’d rather them hear it

⁷⁷ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

⁷⁸ There were three participants each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and two each from Mt. Palm and New Ark.

⁷⁹ New Hope 6, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

⁸⁰ There were thirty eight participants. Eleven each were from New Ark and Mt. Holy, and eight each were from Mt. Palm and New Hope. Mt. Palm and New Ark included two couples each, while Mt. Holy and New Hope had one couple each.

⁸¹ There were thirty-four participants including eleven from New Ark, nine from Mt. Holy, and seven each from Mt. Palm and New Hope.

⁸² Mt. Holy 4, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

from us first . . . [than them hear it at school] . . . they have to be able to view you as approachable . . . you be honest with them.”⁸³

Although it was unclear as to how much the parents were explicit with the children, one participant’s comment might give us an idea of their conversation.

Mt. Palm 7: “[Talking about male genitals, my daughter said,] ‘Ooo, nay! . . . Ugly!’ I said, . . . ‘natural,’ and she [asks] me, ‘mommy, you touch daddy’s?’ I said, I said, ‘well, it’s, it’s natural,’ I said, ‘he touches mine, so I touches his.’ She said, ‘uuu, you’re nasty,’ . . . [I said,] ‘When you, when you, when you get a boyfriend, and you all having sex, and don’t tell him you ain’t gonna touch it.’ [She said] ‘I ain’t touch it!’ I said, ‘okay, alright, we’ll see.’”⁸⁴

The majority of the participants answered that they were comfortable talking about sexuality with their children or that they would not avoid topics even if they felt uncomfortable when a discussion came up.⁸⁵

Mt. Holy 2: “I don’t get uncomfortable at all . . . If they know that I’m uncomfortable, they wouldn’t come to me . . . [and not] uncomfortable at all at any age because rules are the same.”⁸⁶

While fifteen of those answered that they were comfortable, or that they did not avoid discussing issues of sexuality with the children, they also became uncomfortable when they had to talk about act of sex and intercourse, sexual part, oral sex, masturbation, and sexual feelings.⁸⁷ In such cases, parents tried to create levels of comfort and be accessible to their children. More parents from Mt. Holy recalled situations where they became uncomfortable talking with the children.

Mt. Holy 9: “You have to develop a level of comfort. And you can’t shy away from questions, and even when . . . she gets ask me things that I was real uncomfortable answering, I had to answer her, because she had asked

⁸³ New Ark 3h, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

⁸⁴ Mt. Palm 7, personal interview, 30 Apr. 2001.

⁸⁵ There were thirty-five participants. Eleven were from Mt. Holy including one couple, nine from Mt. Palm including three couples, another nine from New Ark, and six from New Hope.

⁸⁶ Mt. Holy 2, personal interview, 15 May 2001.

⁸⁷ There were seven participants from Mt. Holy, four from New Ark, three from New Hope, and one from Mt. Palm.

... if she is able to come to me and say it, then I have to be able to discuss it with her ... I won't say, 'oou, sex, oou,' ... if she can be explicit, I can be explicit ... and if I'm real uncomfortable, I tend to be real clinical ... but I WILL, I will discuss it with her ... the biggest thing that ... was really uncomfortable ... [was] when she started talking about ... masturbation. That was just, ammmmmm-----it's such a personal---thing ... it might be because how I was raised ... that was taboo, you know, you just, you know, you don't do that. That was dirty, you're nasty, ... I couldn't never, ever say anything like that to my mom, you know, and you just get cut off that, that needs."⁸⁸

Mt. Holy 1: "They all make me uncomfortable! Sex makes me uncomfortable ... 'cause nobody really had this conversation with me, when I was growing up, so I wasn't really prepared to have the exact same kind of conversation that I ... [am] having ... I'm more comfortable with it, because they [my children]'re extremely comfortable. They tell me, just about everything. I know they have secrets, ... [but] my son told me that a girl asked him if she could give him a blow job, those words, and ammm, he was fine with it, since he was comfortable, I couldn't act uncomfortable in front of him, wait until he left, then I had a break down. ... But now, I'm glad I have."⁸⁹

New Ark 9: "Maybe, ... we've never talked about her own sexual feelings ... because I have been uncomfortable in that particular instance, but I am going to talk with her about that. We've got to discuss that ... I have not intentionally not talked about certain things. You know, I just haven't gotten there."⁹⁰

New Hope 7: "No parent wants to think about their child experimenting, so that's always a little uncomfortable, but I don't avoid it ... it's not always fun, to talk about different things, but there're things that have to be talked about. And if you don't talk about them, then the children don't know where you stand."⁹¹

Many parents answered that they had not yet discussed issues of sexuality. The topics that the participants could not talk about were personal sexual experiences, acts of sex, appropriate forms of touching and kissing.⁹²

⁸⁸ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

⁸⁹ Mt. Holy 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

⁹⁰ New Ark 9, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

⁹¹ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

⁹² There were seven participants from Mt. Palm, three from New Hope, two from Holy, and one from New Ark.

Mt. Palm 3: "I don't talk about what it feels like, and uuu! That's hard! . . . I don't go into the sexual habit, because I think health class . . . does that . . . [uncomfortable is] my own sexuality. Never discussed my own . . . actual behavior."⁹³

Only answering children's questions was one way for many parents to minimize uncomfortable settings. Some participants answer a child's question specifically.⁹⁴

Among them, a few stated that they examined how much the child could understand.

New Hope 8h: "Depending how old they are, and the questions that they ask, you might be able to . . . give them enough information to satisfy their curiosity, but not give them all of the details yet . . . [but] when they want to know, they'll ask, and then I'll give them the answers they need . . . instead of initially just coming up and start to answer that question, we'll ask 'well, what do you think it is?' or, 'what, what do you think that is, how do you feel about that?' and try to get their perspective. And sometimes that . . . let you know how deep you need to go into your explanation."⁹⁵

Others "watered down" the explanation depending on the child's maturity level.⁹⁶

New Hope 3: "Of course when they're younger, water it down a little bit . . . not so much detail about the act of sex itself, but explain, when men and women get together, you don't have to explain exactly how they get together, at a very young age. When they're older, you can explain to them exactly what's happening. Ammm, what part goes where, and about intimate relationships."⁹⁷

Little conversation between participants and their own parents, and in the parents' church, appeared to have prompted the participants to have discussions about sexuality. The majority of the participants from all churches answered that they did not have open

⁹³ Mt. Palm 3, personal interview, 15 June 2001.

⁹⁴ There were six participants from New Ark, three each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and one from Mt. Palm.

⁹⁵ New Hope 8h, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

⁹⁶ There were five participants from Mt. Holy, four each from New Ark and New Hope, and one from Mt. Palm.

⁹⁷ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

conversation with their own parents, except very little things, such as “don’t do it.”⁹⁸

They obtained information from other sources, including siblings, neighborhood adults, friends, and school. The participants’ parent taught by example, thus they had to guess what was expected of them..

New Ark 5: “They didn’t really teach . . . the way my mother told me about sex was she gave me a book, and say, ‘here, read this, if you have any question, ask me.’ Well, I was, I wasn’t the kind of child that would ask questions like that. So I never asked, I just had questions but, . . . didn’t get answer or anything . . . it was more, . . . ammm, by example, and . . . ammm, they did tell that they believed that sex was, should be reserved for marriage.”⁹⁹

Mt. Holy 4: “Very . . . covertly . . . my mother was not straight forward about it . . . dealt with it as little as possible. Ammm, you know, back in the, in the day when I was growing up, we did more talking to our friends about sexuality than anything else, and ammm, of course, we had . . . health classes . . . you read magazines . . . you really did not get into a conversations about sex, with the parents, when I was growing up. You know, you learned about ammm, behavior, you know, from your parents, in that you knew UNDOUBTEDLY that it was not acceptable for you to be engaged in the sexual behavior without being married. You know, that was NOT ammm, be condoned . . . my father would frighten you more than anything else about possibly getting into a relationship with a young man and having sex, you know, you KNEW that it was something that would bring down the wrath of your father on your head. . . . So you knew not to do that . . . ’cause there would’ve been an embarrassment to your family, and would’ve been disrespectful to your family.”¹⁰⁰

A minority had parents who openly discussed issues of sexuality.¹⁰¹

New Hope 3: “She [my mother] was sort of a product of the sixties and seventies where sexuality was very open . . . up front with me in detail and questions I had, but she almost made it sound enticing, . . . so forward with how wonderful sex is . . . I told him [my father, when I had sex for the first

⁹⁸ There were thirty-eight participants. Eleven were from Mt. Holy, ten each from Mt. Palm and New Ark, and seven from New Hope. Mt. Palm and New Ark included two couples each, while the other two churches included one couple each.

⁹⁹ New Ark 5, personal interview, 25 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Mt. Holy 4, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰¹ There were three participants each from New Ark and Mt. Palm, two from New Hope, and one from Mt. Holy.

time], amm, that's one thing with both of my parents, I was always very honest with everything.”¹⁰²

Mt. Palm 6h: “They weren't afraid to tell me about amm, sexual things. Amm, we didn't really have a strong discussion about homosexuality, because that wasn't really prevalent as much as it is today . . . but as far as the using the condom, amm, as far as the birth control pills, my parents did talk to us about that as we were growing up, and telling us the rights and wrongs, when you engage in sexual activities . . . my mother, and my father, they sat us down also, and talked to us about sexual morality, but . . . the discussion came from my mother, . . . my mother was very straight forward with us, and told us the seriousness about if we made a girl pregnant, and what the responsibility was gonna be. And she made us, she said, ‘if you *do* make a girl pregnant, you're gonna be accountable,’ so my mother was the strong one in my family, now my father, he would also discipline us and tell us about if you do this, this is what you gonna do to make your life.”¹⁰³

Most of the participants from all churches answered that they didn't remember the church teaching sexual morality, except that the church taught that premarital sex was wrong.¹⁰⁴ The church focused on “biblical” teaching, right and wrong, and the importance of marriage. The biblical passages that parents and the church used when the participants were growing up were different from those that are used now. The examples that interview participants recalled were the Ten Commandments and the story of Adam and Eve. Having sex was “really bad, . . . [and] next to dirt.”¹⁰⁵ A few African American women expressed resentments of the past when churches imposed stigma, or ostracized single mothers.¹⁰⁶ Participants did not have a place to take their questions. The church told them that it was wrong to be engaged in premarital relationships, but did not provide reasons that could shield the participants from the pressure of freer sexual expressions.

¹⁰² New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰³ Mt. Palm 6h, personal interview, 6 May 2001.

¹⁰⁴ There were twelve participants including three couples from Mt. Palm, eleven including one couple from Mt. Holy, another eleven including two couples from New Ark, and nine including a couple from New Hope.

¹⁰⁵ New Hope participant 4, personal interview, 17 Apr. 2001.

New Hope 1: "Other than, you know, thou shalt not commit adultery that type of thing, as far as giving any real instructions, I mean, I don't recall any of that."¹⁰⁷

Mt. Holy 9: They put the fear of God in you. . . . [If] you get pregnant, and you're not married, that was a stigma. You were, you know, just ostracized by the church, by the community, you were no longer the 'good' girl. Ammm, so, you were actually afraid, and if you chose to have sex, . . . you're really taking a risk . . . I had friends who did, and I thought they were just awesome, they were just, oh my goodness, you know, 'I can't believe they're doing this,' . . . that was just too wild for me . . . if a girl became pregnant, she had to go before the church, and ask for forgiveness, to be accepted back into the church. Of course, the guy who got her pregnant didn't have to go. They didn't ask who he was. You know, and even if they KNEW who he was, they wouldn't. He was not required, because that was something that a man was supposed to do, I mean, you know, that's a male thing, you're supposed to want to have sex, . . . but when a girl did that, then it was a sin. So she had to go to all these, these changes, I mean, asking for forgiveness, and like I said, being ostracized. Not being able to participate in church functions like the choir, everything, until they said, 'okay, we forgive you, you can come back now.' You know, it, it was horrible."¹⁰⁸

The majority of the participants wished their parents had been more open, and given them more information, more instructions, and stronger examples.¹⁰⁹ They wished their parents had discussed such topics as changes that occurred during puberty, consequences attached to premarital sex, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, how relationships evolved, a list of what to look for in your mate, how to deal with break-ups, date rape, how to stop advances of boys, how to wait until marriage, how not to get married for the first time, Christian perspectives on sex as a spiritual gift, sexual feelings, and that sex was not terrifying. The reason for those expectations that the participants had with their own parents is not certain, but perhaps many participants might have needed

¹⁰⁶ The respondents were from Mt. Holy. A discussion about stigma and ostracism in dealing with single pregnancy appears in pp. 90-91, in Chapter II.

¹⁰⁷ New Hope 1, personal interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰⁹ There were twenty-nine participants. Nine were from New Ark, eight from New Hope, six from Mt. Holy, and another six from Mt. Palm including a couple.

more guidance as they were coming of age when sexual expression became freer. A minority, however, answered that they did not miss anything from their parents, and are satisfied with how they were raised.¹¹⁰

Participants' experiences with their own parents shaped generational differences in raising children. Almost all participants answered that they were more open and more knowledgeable than their parents.¹¹¹ One participant from Mt. Holy stated that she used Song of Songs to stress the beauty of sexuality, while her parents referred to the Ten Commandments in discussing sexual morality. Parents tried to be more accessible to the children with issues of sexuality. The majority answered that their parents' silence prompted them to be candid in talking about issues of sexuality.¹¹² Also, several participants mentioned that, because of their parents' openness, they wanted to have open relationships with their children, as they had when they were growing up.¹¹³

Mt. Holy 2: "The other thing I am different from my parents is that I use Song of Solomon. I told them [my children] that love and sex is divinely given to human, it's written in the Song, within the context of marriage. Song of Solomon is, in my discovery, describes the beauty of sex. Here's love, here's sexual love. My parents used the Scripture, too, but their explanation was not from the Song. They used the Ten Commandments more, as far as sexual morality goes. I discuss beauty. I describe the beauty of sex from positive side, the way God wants us to have."¹¹⁴

New Hope 8h: "I don't, I don't see any reason not to answer their [my children's] questions, not to give them the answers they need . . . so, from the way I was raised, in the way I'm raising the children, kind of a flip-flop. It's a big difference."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ There were seven participants including four from Mt. Palm, and three from Mt. Holy.

¹¹¹ There were ten participants from Mt. Holy, another ten from New Ark including one couple, nine from Mt. Palm including two couples, and seven from New Hope.

¹¹² There were ten participants from New Ark including one couple, six each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and three from Mt. Palm.

¹¹³ There were four participants from Mt. Palm including one couple, and two from New Hope.

¹¹⁴ Mt. Holy 2, personal interview, 15 May 2001.

¹¹⁵ New Hope 8h, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

A few participants who were from white churches answered that they were not sure how to teach sexual morality because of the lack of experience with their own parents.¹¹⁶

New Hope 2: “My husband and I have a hard time [discussing sexuality] because we don’t, we haven’t had a, a precedent, . . . So, we’re kind of, unsure how to do it.”¹¹⁷

The majority of participants answered that their children were responsive and listen well to the parents. They seem to be satisfied with their discussing issues of sexuality with their children.¹¹⁸

Mt. Holy 9: “positive, . . . she starts to share her feelings, and, and to a certain degree her experience, . . . I don’t think she wants to tell me everything, but . . . sometime a parent-child relationship diminishes and it just becomes a female-female thing.”¹¹⁹

New Ark 3h: “The kids aren’t embarrassed to talk to us about it.” / 3w: “they’re very open to hearing it. . . . They like to talk about it.” / 3h: “They know exactly where we’re coming from. . . . They’re instilled with the Bible also. . . . They know that the Bible is God’s word. . . . And so they have that moral basis, okay? They accepted well. . . . They see the logic in it, and they know why.”¹²⁰

Yet, participants’ children did not always agree with their parents. A few participants mentioned that they did not always agree with their children’s perspectives.

Mt. Holy 4: “We don’t necessarily agree, especially on matters of homosexuality.”¹²¹

New Ark 6: “We always don’t agree on everything, but then we have to sit down . . . talk about . . . sometimes you have to say, ‘okay, well,’ just let it go, and, and ‘we’ll come back a little,’ you know, we pray about it . . . she agrees that you know, you should be married, and, and should wait, . . . [but] I think she feels that there should be more options out there for

¹¹⁶ There were two participants from New Hope, and one from New Ark.

¹¹⁷ New Hope 2, personal interview, 10 Apr. 2001.

¹¹⁸ There were eleven participants including a couple from New Ark, ten from Mt. Holy, nine including two couples from Mt. Palm, and eight including a couple from New Hope.

¹¹⁹ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

¹²⁰ New Ark 3h, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

¹²¹ Mt. Holy 4, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

women as for her birth control and amm, you know, I, like I, I never did like taking the pill, you know, I've always heard over the years, you know, pills can give you cancer . . . she doesn't feel that way . . . I guess, that's just one of those, I guess, self opinions."¹²²

The churches seem to have been echoing parents in their teaching of abstinence, but while churches did not openly or vocally discuss sexuality in the past, they have increasingly become vocal addressing the issues of sexuality. A book of advice literature, first published in 1979, gives us an idea of the vague language of Southern Baptist churches in discussing issues of sexuality. As for premarital relationships, the book states, "[w]hen physical involvement is entered on this level there is an inability to share one's faith after marriage to the same degree that would have been otherwise possible."¹²³ It avers that "[s]ensual involvement in dating destroys God's potential for each one."¹²⁴ Unlike the churches that I visited for the research, this book, written in the late 1970s, has no language that celebrates sex as a gift from God, and that understands sexual feelings as natural.¹²⁵ Many participants, mostly from African American churches, welcomed the new openness of church now.¹²⁶

New Hope 6: "Now, we can have in the youth department, you know, a very open conversation, we don't always instigate them, but, sometimes kids do . . . he [pastor]'s real open, . . . I've never found a topic that seemed to be uncomfortable talking about it. . . . The same thing with amm, the associate pastor."¹²⁷

Mt. Holy 5: "I think our church is very open on things. We accept people for what they are, I think, . . . I can go to amm, my pastor with any, any question, and get an answer. . . . Our pastor has an open mind on all subjects, which is good . . . he's very good with the kids, telling them, you know, what they should or should not do . . . that's a personal thing

¹²² New Ark 6, personal interview, 23 Apr. 2001.

¹²³ Bill Gothard, Research in Principles of Life (N.p.: Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, 1981) 182. I obtained this book from a Sunday School teacher at New Hope Church.

¹²⁴ Gothard 117.

¹²⁵ A comparison between races regarding sex as pleasurable appears in pp. 70-71, in Chapter II.

¹²⁶ There were eight from Mt. Holy, four from Mt. Palm, and two from New Hope.

¹²⁷ New Hope 6, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

between my son and Him, and the pastor, but he knows he's available if he needs to talk with him."¹²⁸

We have seen common practices of Baptist parents in teaching sexual morality beyond race. Parents, many of whom grew up in the 1960s and the 1970s, and raised children at the turn of the twenty-first century, were constantly navigating the influences of society, the media, schools, and their children's peers. Reflecting experiences while they were growing up, participants were geared to hold open conversations about sexuality with the children. They often used the Bible to support their teachings. The participants attempted to instill a value of abstinence until marriage for both sons and daughters, but parents highlighted their own perception of gender with regard to different expectations to boys and girls, and ways to control their passionate feelings.

¹²⁸ Mt. Holy 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

CHAPTER II

BETWEEN RACES

Chapter II introduces an analysis of racial differences among Baptist parents in teaching sexual morality. The first distinction was seen in True Love Waits, which is a Christian abstinence movement for youth that New Ark Church and New Hope Church advocate. While an overwhelming majority of white participants and pastors supported True Love Waits, many black parents expressed skeptical comments on this movement. Black churches held meetings and classes that deal with issues of sexuality, but they did not have the coherent movement that their white counterparts had. Another difference between races was acknowledgment of sex as pleasure. It appeared from the interviews that more white parents were comfortable discussing sex as a pleasurable gift that God gives to humans. The third difference appeared in the evaluation of sex education. Black parents supported schools as the provider of such intimate knowledge, more so than white parents. Among the white participants, members of the New Ark congregation were more critical than those from New Hope. As for homosexuality, black parents, particularly members from Mt. Holy, more likely provided sympathetic comments, perhaps because of the discrimination that homosexuals face. Attitudes about contraceptives and abortion were also racially distinctive, with more black parents--but with more New Hope participants than New Ark parents--who accepted those practices. It appeared that those

differences resulted from the distinctive understanding of responsibility. White parents seemed to equate “responsibility” with taking care of babies should pregnancy occur, while black parents equated “responsibility” with protection against STDs or pregnancy. The concern of more white participants appeared to be abstinence until marriage, while more black parents’ concerns surrounded AIDS and unwanted pregnancy. Available resources for single mothers might have caused differences in dealing with single pregnancy.¹

True Love Waits is a youth movement in which teenagers voluntarily sign a commitment card, promising sexual purity from that moment until marriage. The card says, “[b]elieving that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship.”² Membership entails retreats, youth rallies, and worship services. The retreat is for Christian youth to learn the importance of abstinence and how biblical teachings support the idea. Participating in rallies helps Christian teenagers to see peers in their schools and communities who have made the same commitment to sexual abstinence. At their church, youths, their family, and the congregation celebrate commitments. The teenager receive a “ring, key chain, bracelet, pendant, charm, or other trinket . . . [as] a constant reminder and reinforcement of his or her commitment.”³ The movement serves for its supporters as a counterpart to television,

¹ Please see appendix B, pp.105-107, for the questions asked in the interviews on sexuality.

² A card attached to Nancy Boehmer, Barbara Brake, Seth Buckley, Liz Davis, Kathy Edwards, Jimmy Hester, Clyde Hall, Dave Payne, Richard Ross, Matt Tullos, and Paul Turner, Crossing Bridges with Purity: True Love Waits 1999-2000 Manual (Lifeway: Nashville, 1998).

³ Parents: Be Proactive Archive, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002
<http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/par_bepro_arc.asp>.

school, and peer pressure, which the movement sees as “the primary influences sending deviant and incomplete messages”⁴ to children.⁵

True Love Waits encourages unmarried teenagers to avoid all forms of sexual activity until marriage. Youths are to demonstrate being loyal to their future mate and future children by remaining sexually pure until marriage, showing love in ways other than sex or intimate physical sharing, valuing people rather than using them as sexual objects, setting physical limits in relationships, communicating to establish commitments with one’s partner, and keeping relationships as a way to bring glory to God. True Love Waits literature assures that limiting dating fun to holding hands and kissing will assist them in avoiding undesirable consequences.⁶

True Love Waits’ commitment also allows those youth who have engaged in sexual relationships to regain virginity. True Love Waits appreciates emotional virginity because “[v]irginity is more of a mind-set and an attitude of purity than it is a physical feature.”⁷ If a youth was forced to have sex, True Love Waits claims that the youth did not lose virginity. The covenant believes in God’s full forgiveness to give “second first times.” Once forgiven, True Love Waits assures youths that they will have a wonderful life because God has a plan for them from the day of the pledge forward. A True Love Waits booklet encourages youths to ask for forgiveness. It says, “turn to the cross . . . [and] restore your relationship with Him. If you have never accepted Christ as the Boss of your life, ask the person who gave you this book to help you know how to begin a

⁴ Jimmy Hester, “True Love Waits: The Movement Sweeping the World,” Living with Teenagers: For Parents of Teens, True Love Waits Update Edition Oct. 1995: 11.

⁵ Peninsula Baptist Association, “True Love Waits: A National Campaign for Sexual Abstinence among Teenagers,” handout, n.p., [1994]; Hester, “True Love Waits” 11.

⁶ Karen Dockrey, “True Love Waits: Family Worship Plan,” handout, New Hope Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, n.d.

⁷ Tony Rankin and Richard Ross, When True Love Doesn’t Wait (Lifeway: Nashville, 1998) n. pag.

relationship with Jesus.”⁸ True Love Waits enables youth to make a fresh commitment to God.

True Love Waits attempts to attract youth by emphasizing negative consequences attached to teen sexual experiences. True Love Waits stresses the risk of sexually transmitted disease, death, lost relationships, depression, shame, fear, anger, anxiety, and guilt. It also points out the negative influence on a child from having a single parent.⁹ Sex is a gift from God when it is in a proper context of marriage. If the youth live morally pure lives while single, they will receive “incredible sexual fulfillment after marriage.”¹⁰ Only within marriage can “two people feel and understand the joy of total surrender to another human being.”¹¹ Abstinence until the wedding night with the spouse prevents envy and jealousy, “increases kindness and trust, and makes truth more natural.”¹² The literature assures that True Love Waits supporters can have “a beautiful, wonderful honeymoon some day.”¹³

True Love Waits originated at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tennessee, as a Christian Sex Education project. The project began in December, 1987. Jimmy Hester, the coordinator, promoted this abstinence movement. In September 1992, Richard Ross presented True Love Waits to LifeWay Christian Resources as part of the Christian Sex Education plan. The first to sign the True Love Waits commitment cards was a youth group in Hemitage, Tennessee, in February, 1993.¹⁴

⁸ Rankin and Ross n. pag.

⁹ Top 10 Risks of Having Sex before Marriage, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/tns_adv_top10.asp>; Lane Powell, I/My Girlfriend May Be Pregnant, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <<http://www.lifeway.com/24hour/24hour16.htm>>.

¹⁰ Top 10 Risks n. pag.

¹¹ Powell n. pag.

¹² Dockrey n. pag.

¹³ Rankin and Ross n. pag.

¹⁴ Highlights from Our Past, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/ldr_hist_home.asp>.

True Love Waits held its first national rally in July, 1994, on Washington's National Mall, sponsored by the LifeWay Christian Resources of Nashville, Tennessee, and Youth for Christ of Denver, Colorado. The event was broadcast on the Charlotte, N.C.-based inspirational Network (INSP).¹⁵ Supporters of True Love Waits from twenty-seven organizations displayed more than 210,000 commitment cards on the Mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. Approximately 25,000 youth gathered for the celebration that included a contemporary Christian concert.¹⁶ In April, 1998, Richard Ross told Washington leaders that 80 denominations had endorsed True Love Waits, and the campaign was active in 60 to 100 foreign countries.¹⁷ In Texas, True Love Waits supporters met Governor George Bush for about 20 minutes. Chris Liebrum, the consultant for Baptist General Convention of Texas, said, "Gov. Bush is a strong supporter of abstinence-based education and has done wonderful things in that area. He is in full support of our efforts and position."¹⁸ In 2001, 31,338 teenagers signed the online pledge to abstain from sex until marriage.¹⁹ This abstinence movement expanded to include such celebrities as A.C. Green of the Los Angeles Lakers, and Amanda Penix, Miss Oklahoma of 2000.²⁰

True Love Waits is political activism. According to the True Love Waits literature, True Love Waits is a grass-roots movement that has no nationwide network of paid employees. It is a free-speech activity for an army of Christian students who resist

¹⁵ Charles Wills, U.S. Celebration Caps Year of True Love Waits, July 1994, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/article_dc.asp>.

¹⁶ Hester, "True Love Waits" 11.

¹⁷ Terri Lackey, True Love Waits Message Goes to Washington, D.C., 23 Apr. 1998, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/newlook/tlw/article_washington.asp>.

¹⁸ Lackey n. pag.

¹⁹ Highlights from Our Past 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/ldr_hist_home.asp>.

²⁰ Celebrity Quotes on Saving Sex for Marriage 9 Nov. 2002 <<http://www.lovematters.com/celebsavessex.htm>>.

disease, death, family tragedies, and broken lives, and bring glory to God. True Love Waits propounds an alternative to safe-sex options. Supporters also claim that the movement can help break down racial, ethnic, and denominational barriers that so often divide communities. The channels that True Love Waits supporters attempt to hook into are local school boards, local school principals, Chamber of Commerces, City Councils, County Commissioners, mayors, police chiefs, sheriffs and so on. True Love Waits is a way to express supporters' belief in sexual abstinence prior to marriage as opposed to safe sex proponents.²¹ What follows is an example of the public announcements of True Love Waits, "60 Second Public Service Announcement."

Taking a stand for what's pure and right in this world often brings ridicule our way and often we compromise our lives in order to be "cool."

Compromising our sexual purity can be hazardous to our health because of all the diseases we could catch. As a teenager, you deserve better than compromise.

There is a better way, and it's abstinence. Some adults have made it possible for you to hear about abstinence at a True Love Waits Rally to be held . . .

All area teenagers are invited. The business community is providing a free T-shirt for every teenager who attends. For ticket information call . . .

You'll be glad you were a part of this event. It could change your life.²²

True Love Waits encourages parental involvement. Its literature preaches that sex education is a home responsibility in sharing a Christian value system.²³ Parents who participate in True Love Waits should not wait to talk to their child about sex until after the school system presents the topic. Classroom discussions at school may include information that conflicts with their beliefs. True Love Waits literature encourages

²¹ Boehmer, et al. 46-49, 63-64, 68.

²² Boehmer, et. al. 60.

²³ Parents: Be Proactive Archive, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/par_bepro_arc.asp>; Parents: The Responsibility Is Yours, LifeWay, 9 Nov. 2002 <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/par_home.asp>.

parents to talk openly, help establish friendships with others who are waiting, make rules that limit dating, forgive past sexual mistakes, and pray together.

The pastors at New Ark and New Hope were earnest advocates of True Love Waits, but they also emphasized the importance of home as a primary place to instill sexual morality. The pastor at New Ark liked the movement because it forgave sexual relationships if you repented. It allowed new purity and gave teenagers a second chance. “Society changed much, morality is lost,” the pastor said, referring to the Clinton affair. He earnestly preached that the church must speak out. The church had to help kids avoid teenage pregnancy and abortion. Abstinence was good because it was “God’s will.” This pastor was opposed to secular leadership and education that provided information on contraceptives. The pastor wanted his youth minister to expand True Love Waits. He hoped it was not too late to regain morality in society. When I visited New Ark for a year from December 2000, it had been five years since the church started True Love Waits, but the pastor thought the parents were not committed as much as he would like them to be, and hoped they would talk with their children.²⁴

The pastor at New Hope also supported True Love Waits. He thought that preaching from the pulpit that sex was bad did not convince people. Sex itself was a wonderful thing. What was bad was sexual relationships outside of marriage. The advantages of True Love Waits, according to this pastor, were that one could avoid unnecessary jealousy, exchange thoughts and opinions through communication, and have a wonderful experience on a honeymoon night. It also enabled couples to confirm attraction to characteristics of a person other than those associated with the body. One could attain self-esteem and respect one’s spouse. The pastor felt reassured to know that

his child's partner had pledged to True Love Waits. He emphasized that the home had to be the prime institution to teach sexual morality. But, similar to the pastor at New Ark, he thought adult members with teenage children did not participate enough in True Love Waits. Because of the few inquiries that he received from the parents, this pastor thought the church had to lead the congregation to combat sexual immorality. The pastor said that government, school, and family did not actively teach morality.

True Love Waits, it's been a wonderful tool for the churches to use to teach amm, Christian sexual morality and values to their young people. And churches are more willing and open today than they were thirty years ago, forty years ago. Forty years ago was probably not heard of, in a typical Baptist church, to have that type of thing discussed, at all. To even mention it would have probably resolved in the firing, aha, of that youth minister or youth director. But today, it's not just amm, it's expected to be as a part of the overall youth ministry, in most, I would say in most churches. So, churches are doing a better job today than they were forty years ago. . . . So, I feel the churches are being more open, and doing a better job of helping young people, deal with their, discovering who they are, their sexual morality and what they were feeling. Those feelings had been there for generations. Amm, and nothing is gonna change that.²⁵

According to the secretary, New Hope had been participating in True Love Waits since 1994. New Hope became familiar with this movement through letters from the Peninsula Baptist Association (PBA). Youth members participated in the Washington National Mall Rally. New Hope had three rallies a year, one in autumn, and two in winter affiliated with the PBA. New Hope also taught True Love Waits through Bible studies. Thirteen teenagers signed the card by March 19, 2001, and there were four others who wanted to sign in. The secretary thought the parents were receptive to participation. A Sunday school teacher has been teaching True Love Waits since then, but the church

²⁴ The pastor at New Ark Church [pseud.], personal interview, 21 Mar. 2001.

²⁵ The pastor at New Hope Church [pseud.], personal Interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

wanted to have a guest lecturer some times so that youth could get to know different teachings, and different approaches.²⁶

New Ark Church started True Love Waits weekend retreats on one Saturday in February 1997, according to a youth minister. He got to know about True Love Waits through a mailing from LifeWay.²⁷ At the retreat I witnessed in February, 2001, girls and boys were separated and taught by youth ministers and adult members of the same sex. The girls, sitting comfortably in blankets, started the retreat by prayer. Using a piece of paper, they pledged to keep confidential the conversations during the retreat. The discussion topics included what it meant to be a woman, standards before going out for a date, how far they could go without having intercourse, and whom they might choose as the partner. Boys discussed sex as natural, the importance of being obedient to Christ, how to treat women with respect and not to pressure on a girl to have sex, and how to stop from getting seriously involved in a relationship. They prayed for their future wife, that she would stay pure, and virginal until they are married.²⁸

On the following Sunday, New Ark Church celebrated the youths' commitment in the evening service. A youth minister praised the youth and discussed how their pledge impressed him in the opening speech. A boy and a girl each read a pledge to their counterparts to remain abstinent until marriage, with the girl pledging not to wear provocative clothing, and the boy promising to respect girls and stop pressuring when a girl says "no." Twelve youths and their parents proceeded to the altar, and received white

²⁶ A secretary at New Hope Church [pseud.], personal interview, 22 Feb., and 19 Mar. 2001.

²⁷ A youth minister at New Ark Church [pseud.], personal interview, 25 May 2001.

²⁸ True Love Waits retreat, New Ark Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 17 Feb. 2001.

carnations as a symbol of purity. Parents seemed to be moved, and their children were proud, with shy smiles.²⁹ They read a responsive reading as follows:

Youth Minister: This is a moment of reverence and celebration. You are about to commit to something that you will never regret. We commend you for your choice.

Students: Because I believe that God has a plan for my life, I choose to make this choice.

Parents: We commend our support and love to you as you take this stand.

Adults: We promise to stand with you as you seek to follow God's formula for success.

Students: Right now I commit to remaining sexually pure from this day until my wedding day.

Youth Minister: The choice you have made isn't an easy choice. But it is the very best choice. I will make a commitment to pray for you.

Parents: When you are faced daily with new challenges, temptations, and responsibilities, we will listen and do everything we can so that you can make this commitment a reality.

Students: I commit my body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Christ, which is an act of worship.

All: We also commit our bodies to Christ.

Students: Whatever things are true, whatever things are pure

Parents: Whatever is noble

Students: Whatever is lovely

All: Whatever is admirable

Students: Whatever is worthy of praise

All: We commit ourselves to these things.

[Students: We, as students commit ourselves to watch out for each other, and turn away from anything that would intentionally or unintentionally lead each other away from our commitment to wait.

Student Guys: In the plans we make

Student Girls: In the way we choose to dress

Student Guys: In our conversation

Student Girls: And in our time]

Students: We commit to this goal of purity and abstinence before marriage.

[Minister: Sex is an incredible gift within the marriage covenant but it destroys the lives of those outside God's plan.]

All: We as the body of Christ commit to God's foolproof plan and the exciting future that we hold in our hands.

Pastor: Prayer [Minister: Amen]³⁰

²⁹ Evening service, New Ark Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 18 Feb. 2001.

³⁰ New Ark Church [pseud.], "True Love Waits Ceremony," handout, New Ark Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, [2001]. New Ark Church used this handout for their True Love Waits worship service.

I also accompanied New Hope Church youths on trips to attend True Love Waits rallies. Youths from various churches gathered, enjoyed watching dramas, and listened to testimonies and poems. Rallies appeared to be a setting where girls looked for some cute boys.³¹ Rallies could stimulate emotion. On one occasion in which an evangelist repeated, “please get rid of the sin inside me and make me pure,” some girls were reduced to tears.³²

The True Love Waits materials and retreats that are provided at New Ark and New Hope reflect the perception of the world each church acknowledges. New Ark uses a booklet, half of which is exclusively for boys, and the other half for girls, while New Hope uses other materials including one booklet which assures second purity for those who already had sexual relationships before signing the True Love Waits covenant card.³³ New Ark had boys and girls separated during retreats, while New Hope included both sexes.³⁴

According to the director of the Peninsula Baptist Association (PBA), True Love Waits rallies started in the Peninsula since 1995. The PBA is an organization within the Southern Baptist Convention, covering Gloucester, Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, York County, and Williamsburg, Virginia. According to the pastor at New Hope, the PBA used to be exclusively Southern Baptist, but now, they welcome Baptist churches other than Southern Baptist. About seventy-five churches were affiliated with the PBA at

The passages overlap the model responsive reading from Boehmer, et al. 18. In parentheses are the sentences that New Ark omitted in the model response reading.

³¹ True Love Waits rally, Peninsula Baptist Association, Williamsburg, VA, 23 Feb. 2001.

³² True Love Waits rally, Peninsula Baptist Association, Williamsburg, VA, 17 Mar. 2001.

³³ David Payne, Raymond Vogtner, Hannah Vogtner, Kristi Wyatt, Tracy Bumpus, and Matt Tullos, True Love Waits: Takes a Look at Courting, Dating, & Hanging Out. (Nashville, TN: LifeWay, 1998); Rankin and Ross n. pag.

the time I interviewed the director of the PBA in March, 2001. Seventy-eight churches in the PBA responded to the first call in 1995. Five hundred teens attended the rally then. Anyone who wanted to participate was welcome, and the PBA worked with all denominations, including Presbyterian, Methodist, Friends, and Lutheran. The PBA distributed information by mailings and through monthly meetings of youth ministers. The director claimed that True Love Waits was not a new idea. Individual churches have been preaching sexual abstinence, but churches started a country wide movement to get publicity. The movement aimed to declare to the world that hundreds of thousands of teenagers were making the pledge to save sex, and that they were not alone. It sent the Christian message of forgiveness. True Love Waits recognized that some youths are already sexually active. The movement encouraged youth to be “sexually abstinent *from this point forward* [the director’s emphasis]. Losing virginity *did not* [the director’s emphasis] affect your pledge.” True Love Waits held rallies as well as in-depth discussion at individual churches. The PBA did not give guidelines, but the director coordinated with youth ministers to help plan True Love Waits. Rallies served as a celebration of the commitment, and to make the activity and statement publicly visible.³⁵

True Love Waits activism implies that the threat of engaging in sexual relationship before marriage had reached the Christian community. Threatened by secular society in which premarital sex was not viewed as sinful, Southern Baptists publicly protest freer sexual expressions through True Love Waits. It helped Christian youth to stay away from the temptation of premarital sex by announcing their determination. True Love Waits could work as a means for Christian youths to reject their partners’ pressure

³⁴ True Love Waits retreat, New Ark Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 17 Feb. 2001; True Love Waits retreat, New Hope Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 28 Nov. 2001.

to begin a sexual relationship. True Love Waits also saved Christian youths who had already engaged in premarital sex by removing the sense of guilt.

The discussion about True Love Waits polarized sexuality to promiscuity and abstinence surrounding marriage. While True Love Waits guided youth to secure a sexual relationship in the realm of marriage, True Love Waits did not comment on sexual relationships outside of marriage, except to stay away from them. If Christian youths became involved in premarital sex, advisors in True Love Waits were certain that youths would mess up their lives. In contrast, True Love Waits assured that abstinence until marriage would bring youth a happy marriage. Echoing the movement, the white participants and their churches celebrated marriage, while regarding relationships out of wedlock as affecting people's lives negatively. One youth minister at New Hope told the whole congregation in the True Love Waits ceremony that sexual relationships outside of marriage "always hurts you."³⁶ Another female teacher at New Hope reassured the youths in a True Love Waits retreat that those who engage in sexual relationships will switch from one partner to another as soon as a relationship ends. She told the youths that those teenagers do not need to have seven sexual partners in a week.³⁷

Although black churches I visited did not participate in the True Love Waits movement, they also had occasions to discuss issues of sexuality. Mt. Holy held a series of adult Bible studies on Song of Solomon in the summer of 2001. The class used a print-out of Biblical passages from a comprehensive Bible identical to the one that I saw at

³⁵ The director of the Peninsula Baptist Association, telephone interviews, 26 Feb., and 26 Mar. 2001.

³⁶ A youth minister at New Hope Church [pseud.], address, Sunday service, New Hope Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 16 Dec. 2001.

³⁷ A Sunday school teacher, address, True Love Waits retreat, New Hope Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 12 Dec. 2001.

New Hope Youth Sunday School.³⁸ Mt. Holy members discussed the beauty of sex and marriage, and the difficulty single Christians had challenging sexual expression in society. Sex was a beautiful gift from God if within the realm of marriage. What was wrong stemmed from the distorted messages from the world and the media. The members discussed sexual images in magazines, particularly those of women who are “half naked.” The topics included rape and sexual assault. They agreed that intimacy includes sexual relations, but could also be achieved without sex. The members also addressed the difficulties of staying away from temptation before marriage.³⁹ Below is an excerpt of a handout from the female minister who led the Bible studies:

This book [Song of Solomon] is not only about a husband and wife and their marital relationship, but it is also about the intimate relationship that Christ desires to have with us . . .

People who have been hurt, abused or mistreated often have a more cautious, suspicious point of view about establishing relationships. With God’s help and guidance, we can be persons who help to present a more positive side of relationships.

Sex is not dirty; it’s a gift from God. The world often takes what is good and perverts it.

Woo your mate.

Intimacy involves, security, communication, respect, love, etc. Sex can be involved in intimacy, but does not have to be.

If you are single and in a relationship that is growing in intimacy and physical intimacy is desired, but you want to abide in God’s timing for sexual relations: . . . Ask God to help you . . . Don’t put yourself in situations that you cannot handle . . . Discuss with your partner what you are and are not willing to do in a neutral place . . . PRAY . . . If you fail to maintain abstinence, repent immediately.

If you are married and there is little intimacy physical or otherwise: . . . Pray . . . Communicate with your mate . . . Celebrate each others strong points . . .

God wants an intimate relationship with each and every one of His children [bold by the author].⁴⁰

³⁸ The Life Application Bible for Students: The Living Bible (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992) 609-16. The student’s bible that I saw in a youth Sunday school class at New Hope was Student’s Life Application Bible (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1997).

³⁹ Adult Bible Studies, Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, 17, 24, and 31 May 2001.

⁴⁰ A Bible studies teacher at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], “As We Experience Song of Solomon: Some Things We Mentioned on 5/17/01,” handout, Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], Williamsburg, VA, n.d.

It appeared that the members had been having frank discussions at Mt. Holy. A female minister of Christian education at Mt. Holy told me in an interview that, in addition to the adult Bible studies on Song of Solomon, they had adult meetings to discuss issues of sexuality. The church members discussed whether or not schools should offer condoms, and if girls should use the pill, with or without parental consent. The discussion included whether parents should be notified of a teen's abortion, while recognizing that pregnancies may be the result of sexual abuse within families. They also discussed how to start talking about sex with their children, and the church advised parents to be open to the child's first question. The minister encouraged members to practice having "birds and bees" talks with someone else before starting a conversation with children. If uncomfortable, members could go to the pastor for advice. Youth also came to the pastor to discuss any issues, including sexuality. The church advised parents not to embarrass the child, and to try to be as open as possible because sex is not a bad thing, but a beautiful gift from God. As for contraceptives, some members thought that children had sex in any case, so they need to provide protection. Others did not support contraceptives because they believe that giving protection encouraged sex. There was a blend of generations in that some elderly members were flexible while others were not. But all members agree that parents should be aware, including whether or not their minor children chose abortion or used birth control.⁴¹

Mt. Holy also preached abstinence at Sunday school. Older youth members, from 14 to 18, were taught to abstain from sex, and encouraged to ask questions of their parents. The teacher explained the emotional, spiritual, and physical hazards of having

⁴¹ A minister at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal interview, 26 Apr. 2001.

premarital sex. The explanation, they argued, was based on what God says in the Bible. The topics depended on the questions that youth bring up. One of the questions was “how far can you go in kissing and touching?” One female teacher’s answer was that relationships went too far if they had to ask themselves that question. She recommended the youth not to go to dark places while dating. The class did not discuss the mechanics of sex because that is what parents should teach. According to this minister, the youth have not asked a “pin-point” question about how to have sex, but they occasionally question whether one should abstain if you really love a person. It seems the youth were confused to hear teaching of sexual abstinence while seeing some single adults engaged in sexual relationships. In such cases, the minister encouraged youth members to communicate with their parents.⁴² Little pamphlets which the church used for Sunday school generally commented on love as in this passage:

[M]an alone bears God’s image. Like God we possess intelligence, feeling, the capacity to choose and to rule. . . . All humans bear God’s image, and as divine image-bearers, we have dignity. (See Genesis 1: 26, 27; Psalm 8.) . . .

When you wrap your mind around the reality of God’s investment in us, it feels good to be loved, doesn’t it!⁴³

However general, the same female minister who led the Bible studies on sexuality acknowledged the necessity of discussing issues of sexuality, including venereal diseases, AIDS, and pregnancy. This minister thought “[c]hurch and family should teach, plus school would integrate [the teachings],” but she did not think that her students had sufficient information about sexuality.⁴⁴

⁴² A minister at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal interview, 26 Apr. 2001.

⁴³ “Unconditional Love,” *High School I.D.*, Lesson 2 June, July, Aug. 2000: 6.

⁴⁴ A minister at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal interview, 26 Apr. 2001.

Although I did not witness them, Mt. Palm appeared to have had conversations on sexual morality. Youth Sunday school seemed to be focused on issues of sexuality during a few weeks in January and February, 2001, before I visited them. According to one participant, the pastor was open to discussion in the youth group. Another participant said that the pastor had been attending some meetings to equip him to discuss sexual morality in church, particularly for the youth.

Mt. Palm participant 5f: "Our pastor is looking at a program right now, we went to a workshop, about two months ago, to deal with the issue, amm, teaching sexual morality to teenagers, so, clearly, I think the church is trying to be forefront of doing that. And, while right now, we're not actively teaching sexual morality, we have resources in terms of counselors, amm, who recommend families to."⁴⁵

New Ark and New Hope, both white Southern Baptist churches, strongly supported True Love Waits and held retreats and rallies for the youth, while African American churches did not participate in True Love Waits. While most of the white participants' children signed a pledge card, promising abstinence until marriage, there was only one black family whose children participated in the movement. Some African American participants were not familiar with True Love Waits.⁴⁶ Others had heard of the movement, but did not know that it was called "True Love Waits."⁴⁷ Only a few participants from black churches knew about True Love Waits when asked during the interview I conducted.⁴⁸ All of white parents, except two--one participant from New Hope who doubted the effectiveness, and the other from New Ark who did not answer--enthusiastically supported True Love Waits.

⁴⁵ Mt. Palm [pseud.] participant 5f, personal interview, 18 May 2001.

⁴⁶ There were seven participants from Mt. Palm, and one from Mt. Holy.

⁴⁷ There were five participants from Mt. Holy, and two from Mt. Palm.

⁴⁸ There were four participants from Mt. Holy, and two from Mt. Palm.

New Ark 3h: "True Love Waits preaches God's word." / 3w: "It was neat that . . . someone that they respect who's not a family member, but someone they see as a role model, you know, basically was telling them the same thing that they hear at home . . . I think that's a great program . . . they pleaded to remain pure, and they talk about it, and there was almost a pride about that . . . you gotta make them buy into it, you know, . . . you don't wanna be seen as a negative thing, like, "*You can't do this*, [the participant's voice sounds mean]" You want to be seen as God's way is the right way, and it's *wonderful* [almost a sigh] . . . it's not because He doesn't want you to have any fun . . . because it's . . . the most healthy for you."⁴⁹

New Hope 1: "It [True Love Waits] sounds good, but I've heard that . . . a lot of the people who have made pledges have not waited, and I mean, that's the thing, I hate to make somebody make a pledge if they're not really live up to it."⁵⁰

In contrast, African American participants did not support True Love Waits as enthusiastically as their white counterparts. Some black participants embraced the idea of True Love Waits,⁵¹ while others doubted the effectiveness of its abstinence pledge.⁵²

Mt. Holy 3: "I wouldn't like sort of force them. . . . I want them to think about what I've taught them, but I wouldn't like say, 'okay, you sign this, so that I can trust you to do what you say you're gonna do,' because if you really don't mean it, you can sign in and, and you know, still break a contract . . . if he [my son] wanted to do [to sign in a pledge], fine, I wouldn't have any objection."⁵³

Mt. Holy 1: "[To] sign a pledge card makes no difference whatsoever, I think the ceremony is ammm, probably more for the parents, than it is for the children who participate in it, the parents for some reason seem to find a great deal of comfort in that whole activity, . . . I don't think I'd ask my daughter to participate unless she wanted to."⁵⁴

The ideal of purity appears in the language that white Southern Baptist churches and the members use when they discuss the importance of abstinence until marriage.

Through the True Love Waits movement, Christian youths are to maintain purity which

⁴⁹ New Ark [pseud.] participants 3h and 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁰ New Hope [pseud.] participant 1, personal interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

⁵¹ There were seven participants from Mt. Holy, and five including two couples from Mt. Palm.

⁵² There were four participants from Mt. Palm, and three from Mt. Holy.

⁵³ Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁴ Mt. Holy 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

protects them from unnecessary hazards, including teen pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Southern Baptist members argue that securing purity helps create successful marriages. They say having sexual relationships with those other than their spouse creates jealousy within marriage. Along with the emphasis on sexual abstinence, True Love Waits refers to a second chance to regain purity if a youth repents his or her sin to have engaged in sexual relationships before marriage. The movement provides second purity by applying mental virginity. When the youths and the congregation pray to gain power to resist sexual temptations, they highlight the idea of purity, such as, “God, please help me stay pure until I meet the right person to marry that is in your plan.”

Contrary to white counterparts, African Americans retained a pragmatic approach to instruct children to be abstinent until marriage. Black respondents said if a child knew what was important, he would follow the rule. Unlike white participants who supported the True Love Waits movement, African American parents did not require the children to publicize their determination to the outer world. Many black participants did not believe in external controls, but relied on internal control.

Although the abstinence approach was ideal for Christian parents across race who participated in the interviews, some participants from all churches expressed ambivalent responses when talking about abstinence. A few participants from each church acknowledged a possibility that a child might become tempted.⁵⁵ It appeared that parents would forgive should a child become sexually active before being married.

⁵⁵ There were three participants each from Mt. Holy, Mt. Palm, and New Hope, and two from New Ark.

New Hope 8w: "I know people who are Christians who . . . they got pregnant before they got married. I mean, stuff happens, we all make mistakes 'cause we're imperfect. We're, nobody is perfect. And . . . it's a wonderful thing about our God, that He always forgives us with the mistakes that we make. But when you make a mistake, you have to take responsibility for the mistake. And I think that's where the sin comes in, I'm not condoning . . . premarital sex, by any stretch of imagination, but if it so happens, then I don't think that child should be ridiculed because it so happened. That shouldn't [be] ostracized from the family, or ostracized from their church, they have to still be loved and supported."⁵⁶

In addition to their references to God's forgiveness, New Hope participants' comment--"no sin is greater than any other sin"--perhaps highlighting the difference from New Ark, where all respondents were married. Perhaps responses from New Hope participants also reflected the variety of members, including married couples as well as divorced, and single parents.

New Hope 7: "It is no greater sin than any other sin, on the face of the earth. A lie, stealing, rape, murder, and abortion, are equal sins. Christ and the Bible *never* said that one sin was greater than another. I've talked to [my children about] . . . not passing judgment on people that they know."⁵⁷

Another ambivalent comment was that some parents from all churches do not force their children to avoid premarital sex, despite their strong support for abstinence until marriage. Each church had three parents who answered that it would be the child's decision to have a sexual relationship out of wedlock.⁵⁸ Some participants commented that they prayed for their child to remain abstinent until marriage.⁵⁹ They hoped that the child respected the value of abstinence, while giving them privacy about decision making.

⁵⁶ New Hope 8w, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

⁵⁷ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

⁵⁸ The data included one couple at New Ark.

⁵⁹ There were four participants each from Mt. Palm and New Hope, and three each from Mt. Holy and New Ark.

Mt. Palm 3: “*You have to live with the decision . . . I have to let them speak from their hearts, because I don’t want to speak for them because they have their own feelings, and you know, even though I’m a mother, I’m a realistic person . . . set the example, and then they make their own decisions. And sometimes they may make a wrong decision, but somewhere in their thinking, they’ll say, ‘mama used to say,’ or ‘she said, this would be the outcome.’*”⁶⁰

New Ark 10m: “I wish I believe it is [that my children do not have sex] prior to marriage . . . we never know for sure until they’re older . . . I believe that they’re trying with all their heart to wait . . . you never for sure know . . . there’s some privacy in their lives, and you wanna give them that privacy as they grow up, but . . . I think from our discussions, . . . they’re on the right track.”⁶¹

Churches and the members embraced the ideal of abstinence, particularly at New Ark, but it appeared that “abstinence” for some participants did not mean abstinence until marriage. Two participants, one of whom was black and the other white, interpreted “abstinence” to be until their children became responsible adults.

Mt. Holy 9: “Yes, yes [I support True Love Waits], and, . . . that does not mean to me, . . . sex until marriage. I mean it’s until you love somebody . . . you do wait until the time is right, you wait until you, you’re financially responsible, you wait until you’re academically ready . . . that’s what it means to me . . . I encourage her by trying to instill respect for herself, by encouraging her socialization with peers . . . who share more of her values.”⁶²

New Hope 3: “Hopefully they’ll stay away, at least until they *do* find somebody they love . . . and the church hopefully will forgive me, but . . . to wait until they’re married. Amm, especially in this stage in age, it’s very difficult. And, I just hope it’s with somebody they love. The Bible says in one part that after you’re married. But marriage IN part of the Bible, is simply consummating relationship. So, . . . as long as they handle themselves well, and do wait.”⁶³

Discrepancies between the participants’ ideals of abstinence until marriage and some comments that presuppose premarital relationships suggested that the value of

⁶⁰ Mt. Palm 3, personal interview, 15 June 2001.

⁶¹ New Ark 10m, personal interview, 8 June 2001.

⁶² Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

⁶³ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

abstinence has different meanings for the participants. Comments such as leaving decision making up to the child, and accepting abstinence until the child found a true relationship, highlighted the participants' blending their Christian value of abstinence until marriage, and individual value of respecting personal choice.

The second distinction between races was that more white participants acknowledged sex as pleasurable, and as natural. There were nine participants from Southern Baptist churches⁶⁴ while there were three African American participants⁶⁵ who acknowledged the pleasure of sex, and that having sexual feeling is natural. The majority of the white participants stated that sex is a gift from God, if sexual relationships are within the realm of marriage, while there were only a few participants from black churches who provided similar comments.⁶⁶

New Hope 6: "[I discussed] when they were younger, that sex was a gift from God, to be, in a confines of marriage, not only for having children, but for pleasure of the couple. And that . . . sex and, and, and the foreplay and stuff that teenagers get involved in, that . . . the feelings and things that they have are normal."⁶⁷

Access to the True Love Waits movement might have caused the difference in acknowledging sex as pleasurable. The movement, perhaps, made white participants more comfortable discussing issues of sexuality, including passionate feelings. The language of white participants was similar to that of True Love Waits literature. True Love Waits and white participants assured Christian youths that they should enjoy sexuality within marriage.

⁶⁴ Five were from New Hope, and four were from New Ark.

⁶⁵ Two were from Mt. Holy, and one from Mt. Palm.

⁶⁶ There were nine participants from New Ark, and six from New Hope, while there were three participants from Mt. Holy, and two from Mt. Palm.

⁶⁷ New Hope 6, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

Stereotypes about black sexuality might also have affected African American participants' reluctance to discuss passion and pleasure. Stereotypes represent African Americans as having rampant sexuality, being deviant, promiscuous, and passionate. Black Christians might have tried to separate themselves from the image of black sexuality by not speaking about sexual feelings. Keeping silent about passion and pleasure made it possible to avoid reinforcing this image of black sexuality. Speaking of passion and pleasure could legitimize the stereotypes. Because of those reasons, black participants might have avoided commenting on sex as pleasurable. Similarly, this fear might have led African American churches to discuss issues of sexuality in an undertone, unlike their white counterparts.⁶⁸

A comment by one member from Mt. Holy supports the notion of black sexuality as a reason for African American churchgoers' reluctance to discuss sexuality. This member told me that, when he went to high school soon after school integration, he had to behave in such a way that no one could blame him for anything that was unrespectable. While white students could enjoy "peace and love" during the 1960s, it was not the case for African American students. He thought black youths were still under such pressure. Considering his comment, African American parents at the turn of the twenty-first century might still feel pressured not to discuss sex as pleasure.⁶⁹

The third distinction between races indicated by the interviews was the participants' opinions of sex education at public schools. In order to highlight the participants' opinions on sex education, this section introduced some local public

⁶⁸ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993) 190; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1995) 11. Originally published in *Signs* 17 (1992): 251-74.

⁶⁹ A member at Mt. Holy Church [pseud.], personal conversation, 22 Dec. 2001.

schools' policies and practices of Family Life and Sex Education. I visited four local high schools where I interviewed the teachers. At one school, I had an opportunity to observe classes. Also, I obtained curriculums for the middle schools and high schools that I visited. All schools were in Williamsburg-James City County or in York County.

The school systems I saw strictly focused on abstinence through the twelfth grade. The curriculums from sixth through twelfth grade clearly upheld abstinence policies. Despite a slight change in language for the older children, the baseline in teaching abstinence did not change. For example, a lesson plan for six graders said, "do not have sex."⁷⁰ For seventh graders, it said, "it is important to say 'no' to premarital and inappropriate sexual relationships."⁷¹ The curriculum guide for eighth grade referred to contraceptives, but again, the literature emphasized that abstinence was the only 100% effective means of preventing pregnancy and STDs.⁷² Ninth grade curriculum said, "[t]he student will realize the importance of setting standards for controlling sexual behavior and of postponing sexual relations until marriage."⁷³ The guide for teaching the tenth graders stated that "[t]he student will recognize the need to abstain from premarital sexual intercourse."⁷⁴ The guide for eleventh grade continued, "[t]he student will recognize advantages of abstinence from premarital sexual relations, reinforcing methods of saying 'no' to undesirable behavior."⁷⁵ Lastly, the curriculum guide for twelfth grade

⁷⁰ York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Sixth Grade Lesson 2, 6.4 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷¹ York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Seventh Grade Lesson 2, 7.3 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷² York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Eighth Grade Lesson 5, 8.9 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷³ York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Ninth Grade Lesson 4, 9.9 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷⁴ York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Tenth Grade Lesson 2, 10.4 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷⁵ York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Eleventh Grade 11.7 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

said, “[t]he student will interpret rationale for saying ‘no’ to premarital sexual activity.”⁷⁶ The school system was supposed to advise that students wait to have sexual relationships.

School primarily taught abstinence by stressing the negative consequences of having sex, and encouraged responsibility and good decision making. The class discussed readiness for parenthood, the consequences of non-marital pregnancy, the effects of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, the impact on reputation and on present and future goals, the importance of adhering to family values, the need to complete educational plans, and the burdens of financial responsibilities.⁷⁷ The school encouraged students to make good choices to protect themselves by achieving self-respect and respect to the partner and others. The school emphasized the positive benefits of postponing sexual relationships, especially in attaining personal, educational, and career goals.⁷⁸ In a class that I observed, the teacher was introducing the possibility of contracting HIV virus, which diseases and challenges HIV and AIDS patients suffer, the impact of teenage pregnancy and how that affects future life, including education and occupation. The teacher said later in the class that barriers, such as condoms, have only a 10% success

⁷⁶ York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Twelfth Grade Lesson 6, 12.10 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.

⁷⁷ Williamsburg-James City County, Public Schools, Family Life and Sex Education: Teacher’s Guide, Grade 9 9.4, 9.6, 9.11, 9.14, 9.15 ([Williamsburg-James City County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.; Williamsburg-James City County, Public Schools, Family Life and Sex Education: Teacher’s Guide, Grade 10 10.1, 10.4, 10.5, 10.8, 10.10, 10.11 ([Williamsburg-James City County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.; York County School Division: Family Life Education Program (Revised) September 1999 ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Six Grade 6.5, 6.6, n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Seventh Grade 7.6, n. pag.; Ike Newingham, Campus Life, rev. ed., 1996, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Seventh Grade, ed. York County ([York County, VA]: n.p., n.d.) 7.10, n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Eighth Grade 8.14, n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Ninth Grade 9.13, n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Tenth Grade 10.4, n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide-Twelfth Grade 12.9, n. pag.

⁷⁸ Williamsburg-James City County, Public Schools, Family Life and Sex Education: Teacher’s Guide, Grade 9 n. pag.

rate.⁷⁹ When the class discussed dating and ideal partners, one teacher stressed being careful, saying, “don’t bring your boyfriend home unless you have TRUST!!!,” but did not give specific dating instructions.⁸⁰

This abstinence policy was a way for teachers to avoid making value and moral judgments. One curriculum instructed, “[s]tudents should be directed to ask parents questions with value judgment in the area of premarital sex . . . [and c]onsequences of premarital sex on both males and females.”⁸¹ Teachers said that value was something that each family should define and instill in their children. The school avoided specifying certain religious or cultural affiliation. The purpose of emphasizing abstinence was to avoid STDs and unwanted pregnancy, rather than to have an ethically-right life.⁸² One teacher agreed that schools are in a difficult situation, and were in a dilemma because the schools cannot teach sexual morality, but only safety.⁸³

The school was unable to teach about homosexuality or abortion. A teacher’s guide in Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools indicates that “[a]bortion is not [emphasis by the author] presented as a method of birth control, but spontaneous abortion or miscarriage is explained and the risks of induced abortion are analyzed.”⁸⁴ One teacher said that she does not talk about abortion and homosexuality unless her students

⁷⁹ According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), condom success rate can be as high as 97% if used consistently and correctly. They also indicate, however, that the actual effectiveness among users is between 80% and 90%, with incorrect or improper use as primary reasons for the difference. Medicine Plus Medical Encyclopedia: Condoms, 28 Nov. 2001, Natl. Insts. of Health, 29 July 2003 <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/004001.htm>>.

⁸⁰ Public school teacher 3, address, Family Life and Sex Education class, York County, VA., 11 May 2001.

⁸¹ York County, Family Life Education Middle School Curriculum Guide-Sixth Grade n. pag.

⁸² Public school teacher 1, personal interview, 4 Apr. 2001; Public school teacher 2, personal interview, 5 Apr. 2001; Public school teacher 3, personal interview, 11 May 2001; Public school teacher 4, personal interview, 18 May 2001.

⁸³ Public school teacher 3, personal interview, 11 May 2001.

⁸⁴ Williamsburg-James City County, Public Schools, Family Life and Sex Education: Teacher’s Guide, Grade 9 n. pag.; York County, Family Life Education High School Curriculum Guide, Ninth-Grade 9.12, n. pag.

asked.⁸⁵ Another teacher said “no talk about homosexuality and gays.”⁸⁶ At a class I observed, the teacher referred to homosexuality as a matter-of-fact information that homosexuals do exist.⁸⁷

The significance of Family Life and Sex Education for those teachers was that the school equipped students with information so that they could make informed decisions. The teachers that I met stated that the parents of their students did not seem to respond to schools’ sex education. One teacher said students did not get sufficient information at home because she saw families simply saying “no” to sexual activities without giving reasons to the child.⁸⁸ Another teacher argued that the parents rarely spoke with teachers. She said that her students were inquisitive in class, but did not always seem to have conversations with their parents.⁸⁹ Still another teacher encouraged the students to share thoughts with parents, at least on one topic that her class discussed.⁹⁰

More white parents were critical of sex education at school than black parents. Among whites, New Hope participants’ opinion varied, while most of New Ark participants disliked sex education at public school. At New Hope, there were five members including a couple who favored school sex education, three who thought it was good and bad, and one who disapproved of school curriculums. It appeared that many parents from New Hope acknowledged the positive role of school education as a provider of scientific knowledge, while there were some who claimed that the school failed to teach morality. The participants were happy that the school brought up conversation at

⁸⁵ Public school teacher 4, personal interview, 18 May 2001.

⁸⁶ Public school teacher 1, personal interview, 4 Apr 2001.

⁸⁷ Public school teacher 3, address, Family Life and Sex Education class, York County, VA., 11 May 2001.

⁸⁸ Public school teacher 2, personal interview, 5 Apr. 2001.

⁸⁹ Public school teacher 1, personal interview, 4 Apr. 2001.

⁹⁰ Public school teacher 4, personal interview, 18 May 2001.

home. They said that it also provided appropriate information to children who would not have opportunities to learn about sexuality from their parents.

New Hope 3: "When I was there, I really think it was a pretty good program . . . I think they're teaching more science than they are morals . . . I think the education they're getting is good. Because for a lot of children, the only place they hear it is at school. And they *are* curious. . . . However, other than teaching unwanted pregnancies, and disease, they don't really get into the morals. They don't tell these children they should wait for the love. They don't tell them that it is an intimate relationship with a man a woman, that you should love one another."⁹¹

In addition to distinguishing the school's roles, perhaps the differences in the knowledge of school curriculum might have influenced the New Hope members' various approaches to school sex education. On one hand, some members at New Hope did not seem to have coherent information on the sex education class that their children were attending. For example, one parent's comment indicated she was unaware of schools' incapability of supporting homosexuality and abortion.

New Hope 4: "I don't think that homosexuality is normal, I think it's a deviant behavior, and I think the abortion is criminal . . . murder. I don't know if they're covering this stuff and making it's seem like it's okay, . . . when it really isn't. I don't know."⁹²

On the other hand, there was one participant who knew of sex education and its abstinence policy, although her information was limited to middle schools' practices.

New Hope 1: "They really stress how, you know, the only way you can avoid AIDS is through abstinence, many people would not believe that, they would think, you know, they're teaching that the only way you can avoid is to use the condoms and that sort of thing, but it is not true . . . premarital sex, how bad it is, the other lesson is sexual abuse. . . . So, . . . because it stresses . . . abstinence so much that to me, it would be very good. Now, as far as the lessons for the high school and all, I'm not really familiar with those."⁹³

⁹¹ New Hope 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

⁹² New Hope 4, personal interview, 17 Apr. 2001.

⁹³ New Hope 1, personal interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

Most New Ark participants did not support sex education at public school,⁹⁴ except four members. The majority at New Ark answered that they did not trust the school system that “encouraged” children to have sex. The school lacked morality, and it even offered “wrong” information.

New Ark 7w: “We opt out of that.” / 7h: “[Sex education at public school] is not in line with God’s word, and they show them how to, how to use the condom, and all of that kind of stuff, and amm, no way, they treat them like animals, that they have no control of their body functions and urges and they’re just, . . . and as if they just, kind of, just act like animals, and are motivated by instincts and, and just gonna do that stuff. . . . [School is] encouraging them to go out and have sex, and then, this is how you remain safe from it, but, but you know, kids don’t need to have that because they don’t need to be in that situation to begin with . . . school has no business . . . they’re part of the problem [of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases].”⁹⁵

New Ark 10m: “I think that the public school’s bought into the idea that we can’t teach kids not to have sex . . . so we have to teach safe sex, which is a lie, because there really is no safe sex, because the pore in a condom is 300 times larger than the AIDS virus, so the AIDS virus can go right through a condom, so condom doesn’t make it safe . . . the option not to have your kids take it, . . . that’s good.”⁹⁶

Among the four participants from New Ark who answered that they did not reject school sex education, one participant thought the schools’ teachings were both good and bad, while the other three provided similar opinions as the majority of New Hope participants. Those three supported providing sex education for children who would not have access to sexual morality taught at home. Although, considering that one of them allowed her children to attend health class because the classroom could be a place for the children to spread God’s word, most New Ark participants seemed to be unsatisfied with schools’ not teaching morality.

⁹⁴ There were eight participants including two couples.

⁹⁵ New Ark 7w and 7h, personal interview, 8 May 2001.

⁹⁶ New Ark 10m, personal interview, 8 June 2001

New Ark 2: "I don't have any fear of them [the school] . . . because the Bible is our guide, if they're given information that amm, does not agree with the Bible, then I feel like my children are, I feel like they're smart enough to realize . . . what's right, and what's not . . . it might be a time for my kids to be able to share something in the classroom, that is based on God's words with others."⁹⁷

New Ark participants' criticism about sex education at school echoed their church's protesting against the values promoted by the secular world. More participants at New Ark chose not to enroll their children in Family Life Education. The pastor and the members at New Ark were the only ones who attempted to evangelize me of the four churches that I visited. The pastor told me in one meeting that he could not but evangelize me to the gospel of God. He prayed for me with his hand raised above my head.⁹⁸ Although all pastors and members in the project appeared to be pleased to see me attending Sunday services and other prayer meetings, I did not have such an experience at the other churches.

Unlike the majority of white participants, most African American parents supported the school system as a provider of knowledge.⁹⁹ One participant from Mt. Holy represents such opinion.

Mt. Holy 5: "Schools are very good with amm, giving out information . . . the more information you have, the more you can make a better decision . . . I think it's great . . . the parent and the teacher, and the schools and everything works together . . . they [my children] come home, and you can discuss things that maybe the teacher can't discuss. . . . Oh, I think it's wonderful. Sex education at school, I think it's wonderful. . . . who wouldn't want the child to be informed?"¹⁰⁰

African American participants tended to separate schools' roles in teaching sex education from their own.

⁹⁷ New Ark 2, personal interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

⁹⁸ The pastor at New Ark Church [pseud.], personal interview, 21 Feb. 2001.

⁹⁹ There were eight members from Mt. Holy and ten including two couples from Mt. Palm.

¹⁰⁰ Mt. Holy 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

Mt. Holy 2: "I do not go to details. FLE [Family Life Education] is teaching it. I just make sure that they [teachers] don't give her [my daughter] morality. . . . Teachers are not the source of morality now. So, schools just provide education . . . it's okay, I'm glad that they're doing it. I attended Family Life, I was glad how they taught it, because I didn't wanna hear, 'it's okay,' or see them teaching morality. They didn't. You have to know the importance of how to take care of bodies. You have to teach everything. Sex education needs to be at school. It's a part of education. Because people are dying because of what is directly related to sexual act. Tell them the truth."¹⁰¹

Mt. Holy 9: "I support it [sex education at school] . . . they may give a lot more clinical . . . it is, is to complement what you do at home . . . they give them the clinical . . . the values and morals have to be taught at home. . . . I'm not gonna show my daughter how to put a condom on a cucumber, you know, to me, that's encouraging . . . if the teacher says, 'well, this is how you do it,' then she knows how, so they help me, so they're just a tool for me, you know, so I support it."¹⁰²

There were two participants each from Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm who thought sex education at school had good and bad results, but generally, there was no participant from black churches who disapproved of schools teaching sex education.

Mt. Palm 1f: "I can't handle the fact that the school is sort of where the children can get you a condoms, . . . kind of stuff, you know, I think that's crazy. Because you're giving my child permission to have sex, which . . . [is] unfair to the parent . . . I don't mind the school teaching my children about sex education, I mind my children being given condoms at school."¹⁰³

The fourth distinction between white Southern Baptist and African American participants concerned homosexuality. Participants regardless of race condemned homosexuality, saying that it was biblically sinful, but the ways in which black and white parents attempted to accept homosexual "sinners" were different. Although the number of the black participants who responded to the issue of homosexuality was small, it appeared that African American parents referred to homosexuals as "people," that they should not

¹⁰¹ Mt. Holy 2, personal interview, 15 May 2001.

¹⁰² Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰³ Mt. Palm 1f, personal interview, 26 June 2001.

be discriminated against. Four parents from Mt. Holy and one from Mt. Palm answered that they taught their children not to discriminate against homosexuals because they were human. It appeared that those participants identify with homosexuals who are suffering from discrimination.

Mt. Holy 5: "But I'm not gonna not like you because you're gay. No! uhuh, . . . and I hope my children understand it, because I have [relatives] that are like that . . . and it's a hard life. It's a hard life for these people. So they need love just like everyone else understand them . . . it's not taboo or any, they [my children] can talk, they can discuss it. . . . Just, he [homosexual]'s a person, he's different. Fine. . . . the act is unnatural . . . to me, . . . but as far as being a person, I can accept the homosexual . . . 'cause they're people. How do I know you're homosexual? Unless I see you doing something. . . . I don't think it's natural, but then that's my opinion. . . . if they [my children]'re laughing at a person who's homosexual, I say, 'would you want them to laugh? It's the same as a person as disabled. Would you want them to laugh what you're about something?' You got to treat that person. . . . They have feelings. But don't laugh at people, I don't like people who laugh at people, because you're DIFFERENT. We're all different. Treat as people. That person has feeling. Maybe a reason, that they're like that. I don't know how that occurs. Nobody knows. . . . Homosexual or whatever. Black, white, green, yellow, whatever. . . . That's a person."¹⁰⁴

A few parents from Mt. Holy wondered whether homosexuals chose to be homosexuals. While two participants answered that they did not think homosexuals chose to be homosexuals, there was one participant who regarded homosexuality as a choice.

Mt. Holy 9: "Homosexuality, ammm, and I raised her to believe like I believe that . . . that is, that is something, that, I don't think anybody CHOOSES to be a homosexual, so I don't think anybody chooses to be, ammm, at, to experience any prejudice or anything because of this sexual orientation, and you have to respect all people, and so, she has several friends, ammm, guy friends, who are, who are gay, I have friends who are gay, ammm, I have friends who are lesbian, you know, I have friends who are bi, and I have friends who are straight. Ammm, and they're people."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Mt. Holy 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

Mt. Holy 3: "Like I said, each person makes choices, amm, . . . I'm sure I would be upset if . . . my sons came and told me that they were *homo-sexual*, it would bother me. . . . but there would be nothing I can do about it."¹⁰⁶

Perhaps it was because Mt. Holy included homosexual members that there was variety in deciding whether homosexuality was a choice or determined by nature, and that more participants from Mt. Holy commented on homosexual issues. But the church and the members seem to be challenged in acknowledging issues of homosexuality.

Mt. Holy 9: "I don't think that this church has really come to terms with homosexuality, amm, I don't think that they're, they're amm, anti-homosexual or anything, but I don't think that they know HOW to amm, to talk about it. And I think that there are a lot of conflicts between how you expect something, . . . when they say, 'that's in the Bible,' something that the Bible that a man should not wear garments of a woman, or a woman shall not wear the garments of a man, or something, and this [is] in the Bible, and you know it's there, but [it] doesn't matter to you if a woman comes in a church with, with a pants . . . and I remember when women wore the three-piece suits and the ties, and that was a fashion statement that women were doing, and it was allowed. And so, I don't think that the church as a whole has, has, has been able to formulate a balance . . . what's happening now, with what's in the Bible. I think there is a problem. I don't know how to solve it. I just know there are."¹⁰⁷

Mt. Holy 1: "There's a young man [that we know of, and is a Christian], she [my daughter] wants to know if that means he's going to hell when he dies . . . because he broke one of the commandments, on it, it says in the Bible that men should not be with men, and he was with a man. And you know, I explained as best as I could, which is, you know, that, that's something he has to answer to God for, not us, and it's not our place to make a judgment on it, nor place judgment on his lifestyle, so, we've, we've discussed."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Mt. Holy 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰⁷ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Mt. Holy 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

Unlike their black counterparts, white parents teach their children to “love the sinner.”¹⁰⁹ The white participants’ way to accept homosexuals tended to separate “sinful” homosexual acts from individuals who are homosexuals.

New Hope 7: “Homosexuality. Ammm, . . . hum, . . . homosexuality is not the route that I want my children to ever take. And so, you pray about that. But you can’t deny that they exist. And homosexuality is a sin. And it’s, in the Bible, . . . but no sin is greater than any other sin. . . . Not my job to pass judgment on homosexuals. That is God’s job. So I’ve talked to my children to step back from that. Not to participate, . . . but you’re to love the sinner, and not the sin. Okay?”¹¹⁰

New Ark 3w: “That’s a difficult subject to discuss . . . [because] media makes the Christian viewpoint out to be, that we’re like homosexual haters . . . we don’t hate the people, we feel that their life style is inappropriate . . . the person has chosen a homosexual lifestyle, maybe, that they’re something genetically not quite right about them, it maybe that ammm, you know, they were abused as a child . . . we don’t hate the people, we feel sorry for them. We pray for them, we pity them, because . . . that’s not right. But when the government says that we should just accept that as normal, NO! that’s not normal . . . if a gorilla exhibit that kind of behavior, all the other gorillas would kill it . . . those people need help, those are not well.”¹¹¹

The fifth difference between races concerned “responsibility.” Responsibility was a topic that participants emphasized, but the context of “responsibility” varied. While there were some participants from all churches who stressed the importance of taking responsibility should pregnancy occur,¹¹² several African American participants stressed the importance of avoiding pregnancy or disease. Six participants, all from African American churches, meant “responsibility” as protection.¹¹³ They might not assume abstinence for their children, but taught about contraception.

¹⁰⁹ Six participants including one couple were from New Ark and two from New Hope.

¹¹⁰ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

¹¹¹ New Ark 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

¹¹² There were two participants each from Mt. Holy, Mt. Palm, and New Ark, and one from New Hope.

¹¹³ Three were from Mt. Holy, and other three from Mt. Palm.

Mt. Holy 5: “If a young woman says, ‘oh, I’m on the pill,’ are you gonna accept that? Do you really believe that? Are you gonna be responsible-not, if you decide to go into this activity, to use a condom? Because you’re just as responsible as the other person. . . . Or are you gonna let all the responsibility falls on the other person?”¹¹⁴

It appeared that African American parents’ concerns centered on preventing unwanted pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases, while white parents seemed to taught abstinence as total abstinence until marriage. Perhaps, the difference in defining responsibility caused another racial difference in that more black participants than white parents teach contraceptives and birth control methods.¹¹⁵ Here are the comments by black parents with both boys and girls about contraceptives and birth control methods. The first two quotations are by parents with daughters, and the third is by those with sons. Unlike white participants whose children participated in True Love Waits, those black participants did not stress abstinence until marriage as a means to protect their children from pregnancy.

Mt. Palm 6h: “With birth control, if you gonna have sex, and [if you] don’t want parents to know about it, at least know about the issues that can help you keep yourself from having an unwanted pregnancy.” / 6w: “One thing, with the birth control, I guess you, ammm, let her [my daughter] know that you’re not giving the permission to have sex, . . . but you’re not with them, on twenty-four-seven, you know, you, you, you try to teach your child right from wrong, but . . . when I, you know, if I put her on a birth control pill, that I’m trying to explain to her that, ammm, I’m not giving her permission to have sex, but this is one method that we prevent you from not [becoming pregnant], it’s not 100%.”¹¹⁶

Mt. Holy 9: “She [my daughter] was sixteen years old, and I didn’t realize how sheltered she was . . . apparently, some girls had a condom at school, . . . she’s never seen one. And, and that’s something that we never talked about, so, I went to the health department, and I got condoms, and they gave me a bag, they gave me a bag full of different sizes and colors and

¹¹⁴ Mt. Holy 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

¹¹⁵ There were seven participants including three couples from Mt. Palm, and six from Mt. Holy, while New Ark and New Hope had three participants each.

¹¹⁶ Mt. Palm 6h and 6w, personal interview, 6 May 2001.

stuff, and I brought them home, and we opened them up, and reopen them up, and I said, 'now you can see 'em.' . . . she was, 'oou, oou, yuk, I don't wanna touch that, I don't wanna touch that.' . . . but birth control, amm, one of the things she has been taught is that when she does decide to have sex, and if, and she is not in a position that have a child. Then, she needs to use some protection, and that she has to take the responsibility for herself, and not to trust anybody else to do that . . . we talked about the need for a contraception, because of AIDS, because of amm, herpes, because of all these STDs you can get . . . [but] I'm not gonna show my daughter how to put a condom on a cucumber, you know, to me, that's encouraging."¹¹⁷

Mt. Holy 3: "They [my children] say, 'oh, mom, we know the things about sex ed,' amm, you know, they [the school] bring a model, they have a model of penis on a stand, and . . . show you how to put on a condom . . . and I said, 'well, that's fine, but your model and their model is two different things when you're in a hurry.' See. . . [but] hopefully, they're not by that showing, then they say that [they are] not promoting, you know . . . I'm not gonna be with them all the time, wherever they go, amm, if you *are* sexually active, YOU NEED TO have on protection, number one, not only, to prevent to have a baby, there's all kinds of, you know, AIDS, all kinds of diseases out here now, and your partner may not be just having sex with you, they could have sexual, you know, five, six, how many people? before now. See. And so, you need to be protected for yourself."¹¹⁸

Having said that more black participants taught contraceptives and birth controls than their counterparts, some black parents, particularly from Mt. Palm,¹¹⁹ constantly debated whether they should provide information. Some African American participants taught contraceptives while stressing that they wanted their children to remain abstinent.¹²⁰ Others did not teach about contraceptives, valuing the importance of abstinence.¹²¹

Mt. Palm 2: "We'll teach him about contracep, contraceptives, amm, but at the same time, are we givin' a permission to, and saying that it's okay, you know, it's, it's like, we teach him, we teach him at school about

¹¹⁷ Mt. Holy 9, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2001.

¹¹⁸ Mt. Holy 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

¹¹⁹ A comparison between Mt. Palm and Mt. Holy appears in pp.91-92.

¹²⁰ There were five participants including four from Mt. Palm, and one from Mt. Holy.

¹²¹ There were four participants including three from Mt. Palm, and one from Mt. Holy.

contraceptives, but at the same time, you know, when they teach him about contraceptives, are they saying that it is okay? . . . but if they're NOT taught, about contraceptives, then end result could be AIDS by not having that knowledge, so it's, it's, you know, it's a, touchy, touchy subject there."¹²²

Similar to some white participants, several Mt. Palm participants answered that they only approved of contraceptives and birth control within marriage.¹²³

Mt. Palm 9w: "If you're married, and you don't wanna have a baby, then there're different ways to prevent that. . . . I don't wanna talk to you all contraceptives, really, . . . need [to] abstain from it until you're ready for marriage. When you're married, you need to start thinking about that . . . that's the time you have to be talking about contraceptives, once you got married, if you decided to get rid of kid, not before marriage because you want to try to sneak around having as many affairs you can."¹²⁴

New Ark parents tended to stress that birth control and contraceptives were not reliable, and that the methods should be used within marriage. Some participants answered that contraceptives were "not safe," and that they did "not always work."¹²⁵

New Ark 3w: "I showed it [condom] to her . . . explained to her . . . that it helps prevents the spreads of . . . venereal diseases and HIV, but . . . only 19% effective."¹²⁶

New Ark 10m: "[T]here really is no safe sex, because the pore in a condom is 300 times larger than the AIDS virus, so the AIDS virus can go right through a condom, so condom doesn't make it safe."¹²⁷

Several participants from New Ark who answered whether or not they taught about contraceptives explicitly mentioned that it had to be within marriage.¹²⁸

¹²² Mt. Palm 2, personal interview, 13 June 2001.

¹²³ There were four participants including a couple from Mt. Palm. For a comparison between Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm, please see pp. 91-92.

¹²⁴ Mt. Palm 9w, personal interview, 8 May 2001.

¹²⁵ There were five participants including one couple.

¹²⁶ New Ark 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

¹²⁷ New Ark, 10m, personal interview, 8 June 2001.

¹²⁸ New Ark had five participants who have not taught contraceptives to their children, and three participants who taught them. Three of those who have not taught contraceptives, and one of those who have, stressed that contraceptives have to be within marriage.

New Ark 7w: “If you’re married, use it at times, but . . . you can’t teach your children one way, and then turn around and say, ‘oh, but if you do this, this is what you use.’ [I would provide information] if she was engaged.”¹²⁹

Contrary to New Ark, many New Hope participants did not stress the failure rate of contraceptives, and appeared to have similar approaches to African American counterparts. Several New Hope parents had taught about contraceptives,¹³⁰ including those who answered that they could provide birth control to their daughters as necessary.¹³¹ There was only one participant from New Hope who stressed that contraceptives could not offer 100% protection.

New Hope 7: “Contraceptives, yeah! I told my, told my son that the best way was not to have sex, but there are sexual diseases out there that would kill you. AIDS and everything. And that, the best form of protection is a condom. Yes. I told my daughter the same thing. Don’t have sex. But I know that they’re human beings, and I know how human beings are. Use protection.”¹³²

New Hope 6: “If you’re gonna have sex, be safe. If you’re gonna have sex, we’ll put you on a pill. I mean, that’s your decision and I can’t stop you from doing it short of locking you in your room . . . [my child] made that decision [to have sex] . . . I didn’t like it, but was not uncomfortable with it.”¹³³

Although both New Ark and New Hope respondents participated in True Love Waits, the way in which they treated premarital sex was different. New Ark participants, who were all married, strongly supported abstinence until marriage while emphasizing that birth control methods are not always effective. In contrast, New Hope participants did not deny the youth access to protection as rigidly as New Ark participants. New Hope participants included those who acknowledged the possibility of their children engaging

¹²⁹ New Ark 7w, personal interview, 8 May 2001.

¹³⁰ There were four participants.

¹³¹ There were two participants.

¹³² New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May, 2001.

in premarital sexual relationships. They could equip children with contraceptives and birth control methods should premarital relationships occur.

In discussing differences in how to teach boys and girls, some African American participants acknowledged traditional gender roles relating to responsibility, while white participants did not provide equivalent comment. Several black participants responded that men had responsibility as a man, and as a head of his future family.¹³⁴ When they pointed out that girls were more affected in premarital pregnancy and child rearing, it appeared that those participants inferred women's role as care-takers. Despite those acknowledgements of traditional gender roles, the participants also demanded equal responsibility of boys and girls. Here, it appeared that the participants tried to help girls who might be left to raise a child without a partner's support. They urged boys to share responsibility.

Some black women argued against total submission to men as well as their belief in strong women. Such opinions were heard particularly from Mt. Holy, which included many professional members.¹³⁵ Several women commented that they did not believe in male dominance, aggressiveness, and chauvinism.¹³⁶ They denied submitting to a man who was disrespectful to a woman, and expressed discontent about the notion that men were freer to engage in sexual expression. Also, a few women from Mt. Holy think that women were strong.¹³⁷ Two of those respondents supported women's control of their own body in terms of contraceptives and birth control methods. One of those who believed in strong women, and another participant who denied total submission to men,

¹³³ New Hope 6, personal interview, 12 Apr. 2001.

¹³⁴ There were two participants each from Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm.

¹³⁵ For a comparison between Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm participants, please see pp. 91-92.

¹³⁶ There were three participants from Mt. Holy, and one from Mt. Palm.

commented that abortion should be legalized. In contrast, white participants did not provide comments that challenged male dominance, or that revealed belief in women.

Mt. Holy 1: “He [my ex-husband] was raised that you just don’t do this[engaging in premarital sex], unless you’re married, you don’t talk about it, it’s amm, women are to be sheltered and protected and it’s kind of a chauvinist, he really is a chauvinist . . . he hasn’t been able to put what’s happening in the real world, and the proper context as to what’s happening in church . . . if a man is doing what he is supposed to be doing, . . . which is, he has Christ ahead of his life, he takes his responsibilities at home, he’s faithful, then the wife is supposed to submit to him in THAT respect, that submitting him, be totally submissive and, and, kind of stupid, which is what I thought originally.”¹³⁸

Mt. Holy 6: “. . . treating me in a disrespectful way, or, not in disrespectful, but just in a, ‘I’m the man, you’re the woman’ kind of attitude, ammmm, . . . and I could not marry someone like that. [If I was the] sole person that took care of the children, which there’re men out there like that, you know, like, well, ‘look, I go to work, you’re the one that raise the children,’ ammm, then our [my husband’s and my] beliefs would be SO different, I could not believe, have married someone like that, or stayed with them, if I married them by mistake, you know, I could not stay with them.”¹³⁹

Participants from all churches did not have a unified opinion on abortion, but there appeared to be a slight difference between black and white responses. While the majority of New Ark respondents and several participants from the other three churches condemned abortion, saying that it was wrong and murder,¹⁴⁰ other participants did not have a common view about whether they regarded abortion as wrong, or as a choice. Several parents merely mentioned that they “explained” abortion to their children.¹⁴¹ It was uncertain whether they supported abortion or opposed it.

Mt. Palm 4w: “I had a conversation with my daughter the other day, that . . . life is given by God, and that nobody can take it away. It [abortion] is a

¹³⁷ There were three participants.

¹³⁸ Mt. Holy 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

¹³⁹ Mt. Holy 6, personal interview, 16 Apr. 2001.

¹⁴⁰ There were eight participants including a couple from New Ark, four from Mt. Palm including a couple, two from New Hope, and one from Mt. Holy.

¹⁴¹ There were two participants each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and one each from Mt. Palm and New Ark.

vicious way of correcting the mistakes that you could have avoided. I used this term, 'stupidity,' . . . [it is] killing baby."¹⁴²

New Ark 3w: "No excuse because there're families who want to adopt infants all over the place . . . little stigma [to be a single mother] . . . NOBODY would look down on you."¹⁴³

Some participants, mainly those from black churches, opposed anti-abortion ideals that some Christian groups claim. Several African Americans, mainly from Mt. Holy,¹⁴⁴ and a New Hope participant answered that abortion was a choice.¹⁴⁵ One African American working woman from Mt. Holy expressed her view on abortion as a means to control women's lives.

Mt. Holy 5: "That's someone's personal choice. . . . Can you live with the consequences after you had that abortion, ammm, what I try to do is tell them don't get to the point where you have to have an abortion. If the pill is out there, take it. If you're sexually active, and don't think, 'oh, my daughter, if I give her the pill, she's gonna be sexually active,' she's already sexually active. Go ahead and give her the pill. Same. GO ahead and take to the doctor, put herself some birth control, because you don't wanna be, deal with abortion issue. That's your personal choice, to me, I think abortion should be legalized, I'm all for abortion, because I've seen people that who had abortion by other means, and it's very unhealthy and has killed people, so, I'm not saying you should have an abortion, but I'm saying it should be controlled, and there should be a place for someone to go, if they find themselves in a predicament. I do believe that you should go and be able to have an abortion if you want to. . . . But I don't think you should have abortion because you don't wanna a child, you know, I don't think it, girls go ahead, have three or four abortion, that's unhealthy, you need counseling . . . [but] woman should have control of. I believe in it."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Mt. Palm 4w, personal interview, 27 May 2001.

¹⁴³ New Ark 3w, personal interview, 29 Apr. 2001.

¹⁴⁴ For a comparison between Mt. Holy and Mt. Palm participants, please see pp. 91-92.

¹⁴⁵ There were two participants from Mt. Holy, and one each from Mt. Palm and New Hope, who answered that abortion is a choice. Also, one participant from Mt. Holy stated that it is their children's choice to have abortion.

¹⁴⁶ Mt. Holy 5, personal interview, 4 May 2001.

A few participants answered that they did not want their children to be judgmental of people who had abortion.¹⁴⁷ One participant from New Hope, whose comment appears below, sympathized with people who had difficulty in their lives.

New Hope 7: "Because on television, they hear about abortion. I am a Christian, and as a Christian, . . . some Christian believe that abortion is, is killing a baby. And I guess technically it is stopping the pregnancy. But in the Bible, sin is sin. So, if you're against abortion and I'm for abortion. But you blow up my abortion clinic and you killed me. Then what makes you better than me? . . . Haven't you heard of those things? There were people that go around and blow up abortion clinics, that kind of thing, they do it in the name of God. Alright? That is JUST AS WRONG, TO DO THAT, as to have the abortion, alright? So your action is not any better than any other action. Both are sin. . . . There's no sin that God can't forgive. So, the object is, not to have sex, to get pregnant, so you're in a position where you feel you would have an abortion. . . . That's why you start with teaching not to have sex before marriage. . . . But if that happens, it's just sin, and God forgives sin, through Christ who died on the cross . . . I am, I guess I am, I'm one of the few Christians that feel that if you make that choice, that is a choice you have to live with, and that is something between you and God. And I have no, I have no place in passing judgment on you. Because I have my own sins that I have to deal with God. So yeah, I have talked to them about that."¹⁴⁸

Although the number of responses is limited, the significant responses which admitted they supported abortion and birth control imply that some participants' practices were different from what Christian groups professed. Indeed, some participants in the interviews evaluated abortion as a means to protect women, and understood birth control for youths as preventing HIV, venereal diseases, or unwanted pregnancy.

Lastly, some black participants' comments about how the church dealt with single-mother pregnancy in the past implied resources that African American and white participants had access to. Black respondents referred to the "ostracism" of single mothers in the past as well as in the present. It appeared that the respondents meant to use

¹⁴⁷ Mt. Holy and New Hope had one participant each.

¹⁴⁸ New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

“ostracism” as entailing exclusion, stigma, and public humiliation. There were comments that suggested churches’ prohibiting single mothers’ coming to church at all, excluding them from church until they give birth, turning their back on single mothers, condemning single mothers, excluding them from social functions but allowing them to come to church services, having single mothers repent in public in order for them to be accepted in the church again. The difficulty in figuring out what participants meant by “ostracism” was due to the fact that they witnessed cases from different churches, in different areas, and in different congregations.

Most responses on “ostracism” were from women, including four from Mt. Holy, and a man and a woman from Mt. Palm. They tended to support churches that accepted single mothers, and were critical of the past, when churches excluded single mothers. Critical comments about “ostracism” in the past were from three Mt. Holy women. They either supported their church’s accepting single mothers in the present, commented that “ostracism” is horrible, or indirectly criticized ostracism. The other comments were neutral in that they acknowledged “ostracism” of single mothers in the past, without criticism or support.

Participants from Mt. Palm and Mt. Holy suggested differences in their politics of respectability. Mt. Palm participants provided more comments that highlighted their discontent with negative stereotypes about African Americans. They tended to introduce moral images of African American women in a similar manner to the black Baptist women whom Higginbotham analyzed in Righteous Discontent: The Women’s

Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.¹⁴⁹ Mt. Palm respondents provided twice the number of comments than Mt. Holy participants provided, urging children to remain abstinent until marriage and to maintain appropriate manners.¹⁵⁰ More participants from Mt. Palm commented on the importance of cleanliness.¹⁵¹ As we have seen, Mt. Palm participants tended to answer that abortion was wrong, and that birth control should be within marriage, while Mt. Holy counterparts were not as verbal in this regard.¹⁵²

Class distinction is one explanation of black participants' differences in politics of respectability. When visiting the churches, I saw a number of professional and economically secure members at Mt. Holy, whereas I did not witness many of those at Mt. Palm. Although it is hypothetical, perhaps, members at Mt. Holy might not feel pressured to portray themselves as being super moral. In contrast, I heard a louder voice from Mt. Holy women supporting women's rights and control of their bodies concerning such issues as abortion and birth control.

Despite the similarities that we have seen in the previous chapter, interview results did highlight some racial distinctions. Significant differences between races appeared with regard to the Christian abstinence movement, and acknowledgment of sex as pleasurable, as well as in terms of their evaluation of sex education at public schools, homosexuality, contraceptives, abortion issues, and church's "ostracism" of unwed mothers in the past. While a majority of white participants stressed the importance of

¹⁴⁹ Higginbotham argues that adherence to temperance, cleanliness, thrift, polite manners, and sexual purity enabled African American Baptist women to refute negative stereotypes of black sexuality. Higginbotham, *Righteous* 191-93.

¹⁵⁰ There were ten participants from Mt. Palm, compared to five from Mt. Holy, who commented that they teach importance of abstinence until marriage. Also, Mt. Palm had six respondents, compared to three from Mt. Holy, who referred to appropriate and inappropriate manners.

¹⁵¹ There were three participants from Mt. Palm, compared to one from Mt. Holy.

abstinence until marriage through True Love Waits, some black parents expressed skepticism of this movement. White participants tended to acknowledge sex as pleasurable. More African American participants supported schools' sex education, and taught contraceptives and right to abortion. Those results implied that the participants' approaches to the possibilities of their children engaging in premarital relationships might be racially distinctive. On one hand, it appeared that more black parents tried to prevent AIDS and unwanted pregnancy. White parents, on the other hand, tended to encourage their children to be abstinent from sexual activities until marriage to prevent negative consequences attached to premarital sex. Perhaps, different meanings of responsibility as well as resources may have brought about this distinction. As for the issues of homosexuality, interview results suggested that the manner in which black and white participants accepted marginalized homosexuals were different. While white parents separated homosexuals from their "sin," their black counterparts tended to perceive homosexuals as those who experience discrimination. The thesis did not find what Higginbotham acknowledged as "bridge discourse," where black and white church members related to each other.¹⁵³ Despite some overlapping values of sexual morality, racially distinctive trajectories emerged in Southern Baptists' protest against the secular world, and African American Baptists' discourse in an enclave.

¹⁵² Please see pp. 84-85, and 87-89.

¹⁵³ Higginbotham, Righteous 197.

CONCLUSION

Looking at individual church members and their methods of teaching sexual morality to their children provides us with unique images of Baptist women and men in America. Although the thesis cannot introduce such categorization of groups as Pechesky or Klatch provided in their articles,¹ participants' responses give us qualitative practices of individual church members that are often concealed in the analyses of Christian political activism. The interview questions regarding the teaching of sexual morality to children focused on the ideals that parents wish to instill in their children. Perhaps this approach reduced anxiety that participants might have felt in discussing private matters such as sexuality. The project tried to contradict the notion frequently heard from advice literature, ministers, and school teachers that parents are reluctant to discuss issues of sexuality with their children at home.

The meaning of "openness" that the participants claimed to attain appeared to be different between each participant and their children. It was difficult to measure how much openness the parents really had with their children. The most significant finding dealt with the issues of contraceptives and birth control. Some Baptist parents discussed issues of sexuality with their children as a secular school teacher might, including those

¹ Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right," Feminist Studies 7. 2 (1981): 206-46; Rebecca Klatch, "Coalition and Conflict among Women of the New Right," Journal of Women in Culture and Society 13. 4 (1988): 671-94.

who showed condoms to their children. One of them even demonstrated how to use condoms with “a piece of fruit.”

Mt. Holy participant 1: “[W]hen [my child] started high school, . . . I bought a box of condoms, . . . and I opened it, and showed it to [the child]. Amm, kind of demonstrated how you put it on, using a piece of fruit.”²

By contrast, some participants meant “open” because they discussed the importance of sexual morality and abstinence until marriage. Those participants answered that they had taught about contraceptives, but did not mention in the interview whether they taught the child how to use it, or told their children that contraceptives and condoms were not a 100% safe method, or if they assured them that it was for a married couple. For example, one participant’s response suggested that his openness meant a discussion about abstinence before marriage.

Mt. Palm 9h: “We’re close enough that I can talk to my kids like anything, and I know, I, I prefer for them to hear from us as opposed to hearing it in the streets, either at school, or from their friends . . . I want them, my kids, to feel like if they have questions, to come and ask me . . . I try to cover as much as possible, I didn’t try to hide, you know, . . . I just try to be straight and honest . . . we’re pretty open with our kids, amm, to tell them, to say, ‘don’t have sex, don’t put yourself in that type of predicament,’ and we’re open. You know, and they’re pretty open with us, and that is very good.”³

The participants’ extent of “openness” might also have been relative when they compared themselves to their own parents’ generation.

New Ark 2: “My mother did. . . talk with me and basically gave me the basic facts, . . . my father . . . asked me, had I been told, so, amm, I guess, ammm, they did, tell me . . . but there wasn’t any open communication about it . . . she just talked with me about love making, . . . [and function of the body].”⁴

² Mt. Holy [pseud.] participant 1, personal interview, 24 Apr. 2001.

³ Mt. Palm [pseud.] participant 9h, personal interview, 8 May 2001.

⁴ New Ark [pseud.] participant 2, personal interview, 18 Apr. 2001.

Another contradiction about “openness” appeared when two pastors from New Ark and New Hope, a minister at Mt. Holy, as well as Family Life and Sex Education teachers at public school told me that they did not think parents maintained “open” conversation with their children.

My wish to protect children’s privacy made it difficult to determine how much information the participants had about their children’s sexuality. Some parents answered in the interview that they did not know if their children were sexually active, but presumed that their child was not active from their conversations.

Mt. Palm 1f: “I have asked one of my children [if he has had sex] . . . he said . . . ‘no,’ but I don’t know that’s for sure, ahahahaha . . . I trust him and believe that his answer is a true and correct answer.”⁵

The extent to which the participants revealed their thoughts in the interviews was uncertain, but their comments after the interviews indicated that their responses represented a fairly accurate view of their attitudes. I assumed that participants would not tell everything about their experiences in teaching sexual morality to their children. Yet, it seemed most participants, except for one who verbally expressed discomfort with the interview, did not feel they were pressured to talk during the interview. Some said the interview was painless. Others who appeared to be nervous prior to and at the beginning of the interview commented as follows.

Mt. Palm 2: “That’s it all? Ahahahahahahahaha! [as if to release her strain,] it wasn’t bad at all!”⁶

Mt. Holy 3: “I was thinking I was going to have some really tough, tough questions.”⁷

⁵ Mt. Palm 1f, personal interview, 26 June 2001.

⁶ Mt. Palm 2, personal interview, 13 June 2001.

⁷ Mt. Holy 3, personal interview, 11 Apr. 2001.

When her child came back home, a participant from New Hope said, “Fumie and I are talking about sex!”⁸ A member at New Ark said immediately after the interview that I made it easy for her to talk, because I was not a church member in the truest sense. It was possible for this participant to talk to me about something that she would not tell to anyone at the church. After all, I was not threatening to this participant because I did not fully participate in the congregation, and was only visiting the church for the project.⁹ Another participant at New Ark said it was not difficult to talk about sexual morality because she was committed to preaching God’s words. It was natural for her to talk because she is used to expressing her feelings in ministry.¹⁰ Perhaps the participants’ belief in Christianity and their confidence as Christians might have made them secure in addressing issues of sexuality to an outsider.

In summary, Baptist participants in Greater Williamsburg, Virginia, determined their own way of teaching sexual morality to their children. It was not solely the church and their pastors that affected the participants. The participants’ personal experiences, how they were taught about sexuality by their own parents and at the church, and society including the media, school, and peer pressure also shaped parents’ teachings. The majority of participants answered that they tried to be as open and accessible as possible, contrary to their own parents. Participants were not satisfied with the experiences of their youth, when churches routinely denied the existence of sexual feelings without much explanation. Some participants tried to shield their children from the influences of school sex education, although there were others who were glad that Family Life and Sex Education classes prompted conversation at home. Parents’ concerns about the media,

⁸ New Hope [pseud.] participant 3, personal interview, 11 April 2001.

⁹ New Ark 5, personal interview, 25 April 2001.

sexual assault cases, peer pressure, impact of AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy motivated parents to have discussions. Baptist parents were in constant negotiation between their concerns and the impact on their children within and outside of the home.

The significance of the thesis was that some participants suggested their personal values were more central than teachings of their churches regarding sexuality, although the church still had an impact on them. While the majority of the participants acknowledged that their church played a significant role in dealing with issues of sexuality, some participants made it clear that the church and their pastors did not affect the way they taught sexual morality at home.¹¹ Some stated their focus was more likely to follow God's teaching, which paralleled the church and the pastors' preaching. They stressed that their individual belief in God was central, and that they went to a church which held a similar view. Others mentioned that they already had their approaches in discussing issues of sexuality separate from the church.

New Hope 7: "I don't think they [my church and the pastor] really have any effect on how I teach sexual morality. I've never taken a class at church, or any Bible study at church on sexual morality, I've done Bible studies that sex was discussed in, but it doesn't give you . . . a teaching nothing on how to do it, we're kind of on our own. . . . Amm, what the church has done for me is that it brought me closer to Christ, and therefore, I . . . know what Christ wants, and know what God wants. I know, by reading the Bible, I know, the word of God, and what it says in there, and it's my job to teach that, in the way that my children can understand it. And nobody knows better what my children, the way my children would understand than I do."¹²

Mt. Palm 6h: "I don't know if he [the pastor] really has a strong part of our, amm, family life when it comes to the sexual issues. I think, because

¹⁰ New Ark 10f, personal interview, 1 May 2001.

¹¹ There were four participants from Mt. Palm, three each from Mt. Holy and New Hope, and a couple from New Ark.

¹² New Hope 7, personal interview, 19 May 2001.

of our close knit of family, it's still just the family part. . . . I'm sure our pastor will allow them [my children to ask] him, but I think we still address a lot of sexual issues within our own family environment."¹³

A few participants were constantly watching their own church. They were careful to monitor what and how the church comments on issues of sexuality.¹⁴

New Hope 8w: "When it comes to our children getting the rules, basis for sexual morality, it really needs to come from the home, as opposed to them getting it from another person within the church. . . . And, I like to read what they're getting, and find out what exactly what, what do the Baptists say today about this. . . . Sometimes, I might disagree with the method and which things are being taught. And sometimes, instead of a lay person teaching certain topics, I feel that someone who has the Christian education background, such as a minister, or the minister of education, you know, those might be the people that would be better equipped to be teaching some of the topics. . . . You don't want your children to get bad information, especially in church. Ahaha, especially in church."¹⁵

Mt. Holy 2: "Our pastor is providing talk for young people as well as for adults. But you have to be careful who's teaching that because church is supposed to teach morality. The person who takes in charge has to speak through God's words."¹⁶

Baptist members' language in teaching sexual morality has changed over time, while the value of abstinence until marriage remained the same. Talking about sexuality and acknowledging sexual feelings were taboo when the interview participants were growing up. Participants' parents tended to avoid speaking about sexuality. The participants often did not have advice about how to deal with issues of sexuality from their parents but were simply told that premarital sex was wrong and unacceptable.

Parents in the 1990s and 2000s were able to discuss issues of sexuality. Parents whose children were teenagers at the turn of the twenty-first century articulated what they

¹³ Mt. Palm 6h, personal interview, 6 May 2001.

¹⁴ One was from Mt. Holy, and the other was from New Hope.

¹⁵ New Hope 8w, personal interview, 21 Apr. 2001.

¹⁶ Mt. Holy 2, personal interview, 15 May 2001.

thought was morally right, and what was not, with regard to sexuality. Their conversation included such controversial discussion topics as abortion, contraceptives, birth control, and homosexuality. They held conversations at home in order to give their children advice about avoiding AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, and the emotional and economical difficulties relating to premarital sex. Participants, particularly from white Southern Baptist churches, acknowledged sex as a gift from God and as pleasurable. A significant shift happened between the two generations in the 1960s and the 1970s, when participants' experiences with their own parents motivated them to be accessible to their children. Another shift might have occurred with the emergence of AIDS which drastically changed people's sense of threat from sex. If the manner in which Baptists teach sexual morality has been changing, the participants' children might also pursue other approaches that are distinct from their parents, reflecting their own experiences and the society in which they live.

Not speaking about sex has different meanings for white Southern Baptists and African American Baptists. Similar to psychiatrists' offices in the years between World War II and Roe v. Wade, True Love Waits of the Southern Baptist Convention concealed the difficulties of maintaining abstinence until marriage. White middle-class girls consulted psychiatrists to deal with premarital pregnancy, and received treatment including reforms and relinquishment of the infant for adoption. Single mothers were to renew a commitment to be a real woman without a trace of pregnancy in the past.¹⁷ Southern Baptists' True Love Waits is a system in which Christians are able to acknowledge issues of sexuality by not speaking about sex. The movement allows

¹⁷ Rickie Solinger, Wake up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade (New York: Routledge, 1992) 86-98.

Christian youths to maintain purity as well as to regain second purity. Engaging in premarital sex is a sin. Once the youth repent by saying, "I have sinned," the church, the family, and the youth do not need to speak about premarital relationships in the past.

The Southern Baptists' True Love Waits movement polarizes successful and unsuccessful sexual relationships within and outside of marriage. True Love Waits does not suppress discussion about sexuality. Instead, True Love Waits celebrates sex within the realm of marriage, while it avoids commenting on successful relationships out of wedlock. The literature of True Love Waits claims that those who are sexually active outside of marriage always end up with consequences that are negative. Supporters of True Love Waits say that premarital sex always hurts people, and those who engage in it switch partners as soon as a relationship breaks up. True Love Waits attempts to secure sexual relationships in marriage, while keeping silent about successful relationships out of wedlock.

Members of African American churches shielded their discussions about sexuality within their church, perhaps, to resist negative stereotypes of African Americans as being sexual. Despite their reserved manner in discussing issues of sexuality in public, African American participants provided in the interviews a clearer depiction of their daily experiences and more individual opinions than their white counterparts. In particular, female participants contested African Americans' silence about their own sexuality in public. Their comments on such issues as abortion, contraceptives and birth control, homosexuality, and ostracism appeared to be more reflective of their personal opinions and daily conversations at home than participants from white churches.

Several factors may have contributed to the clear language of the African American participants. African American participants' manner of dealing with human fallibility might have prompted various types of comments. While white participants use a language descriptive of premarital relationships to codify sin, African American respondents appeared to be more relaxed in acknowledging sexual activities out of wedlock, and such issues as homosexuality. Black parents discussed with their children how to prevent unwanted pregnancy, AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases. With limited access to psychiatric treatment in the post-war period,¹⁸ or because of skepticism regarding True Love Waits at the turn of the twenty-first century, black participants appeared to acknowledge premarital sexual relationships outside of the church. Furthermore, African Americans tended to accept homosexual "sinners" as human beings. Mt. Holy women's comments gave a twist to the interview results. They provided personal opinions that seemed to conflict with white Baptist Christian values on such issues as abortion. Some required respect for women, including those who rejected a patriarchal order in which women had to obey their husbands. Some criticized the ostracism of single mothers in the past in a strong manner.

It is not to say that white Southern Baptist participants did not provide abundant information during the interviews, but their style with regard to controlling fallible humans may have confined their language. Contrary to black participants' pragmatic ways of dealing with issues of sexuality, white participants tended to anticipate hazards attached to premarital sex, and propose ways to prevent them. They supported their opinions by referring to data and writers' comments in Christian literature, including

¹⁸ Solinger, 86-98.

True Love Waits, and those by LifeWay and Traditional Values Coalition.¹⁹ Southern Baptist members had a clear view that premarital sex ends up hurting the couple. They acknowledged that external controls were an effective way to prevent negative consequences attached to premarital relationships. Such controls included dress codes, pledge cards, and accessories representing commitments to abstinence until marriage.

Although a class analysis is relevant to my topic, it is tangential to my main interest, and outside of my area of expertise. Analyzing how class influenced the participants' comments could lead to distortion of my interview results. To understand how class influences morality, representation, and stereotypes would require further research. Despite the difficulty in analyzing class, I would like to comment on some interview results that suggested class orientation. Peiss and Simmons argued that the projection of promiscuity and deviant sexuality reinforced the boundaries of respectability between white middle class and elite, and working class and African Americans. Class and race has led to the distinction between "good" and "bad" women, which links to the contrast between middle class white women's "purity" and the elevation of chastity, as opposed to loose, rowdy, carnal, and debased sexuality of working class and African American women.²⁰

Although identifying which class each church belongs to was a challenge,²¹ the interview results provided complexity to class representation regarding sexual morality. Middle class white women's elevation of chastity seemed to exist in the participants'

¹⁹ What Has Happened Since Christian Principles Were Removed from American Public Life Starting in 1962? (N.p.: [Traditional Values Coalition], n.d.).

²⁰ Peiss and Simmons, "Passion and Power: An Introduction," Passion and Power: Sexuality in History, eds. Kathy Peiss, Christiana Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989) 6.

²¹ It appeared from my observation of occupation, speech, clothing, and cars that Mt. Holy belongs to middle class, and Mt. Palm is closer to working class. It was not clear with New Ark and New Hope which class they belong to, but probably between middle and working class.

comments regardless of race, stigmatizing “promiscuous” peers outside of the church. Christian values enabled church goers to contest race-constructed, as well as class-oriented boundaries of normal and deviant sexuality. Both black and white participants established respectability through church and their beliefs. They distinguished themselves from “the street,” where sexual experimentation exists.

Also, the rhetoric of the “passionless woman” did not appear in white participants’ responses. Their acknowledgment of sexual feelings implied an historical shift from the notion of passionless woman and Christian gentleman to celebration of sex, although the language of purity and chaste women exists in the Southern Baptists’ True Love Waits movement.

I hope my project provides readers with Baptist parents’ ideals and practices in instilling sexual morality. In spite of the interview that asked parents about sexuality, the majority of them appeared to be comfortable talking to me, although I was a stranger until the project began. The participants offered insightful comments that convinced me to assume that they had candid discussions with their children at home, weaving their own values and experiences into religious values. Yet, how much openness they had with their children was still difficult to measure. The challenge of the project was to examine how much “openness” parents meant to attain in discussing sexuality with their children as they revealed it in the interview. School teachers said that parents did not have conversations regarding sexuality with their children. Ministers did not think that their church members had enough discussion about sexuality with teens. Who was correct? The answer to this question will emerge only when the participants’ children speak for themselves.

APPENDIX

[A] The first interview was on the participant's values. The questions are general as in the following:

- Please introduce yourself however you would like to represent yourself.
- Please describe your children, for examples, age and sex.
- What are the beliefs that guide you in raising your children?
- What kind of character do you want your children to develop?
- How do you instill your values in your children?
- How does your child's school contribute to, or hinders the values and behaviors you encourage?
- Please describe any concerns you have with outside influences, such as from TV, movies, school teachers, classmates, etc., as opposed to the home and the church.
- How did your own parents affect your values when you were a youth?

[B] The second interview concerned issues of sexuality.

1) What parents teach:

- How do you teach sexual morality to your children?
- What do you teach in relation to sexual morality with your children?

- What are the topics, if any, that you avoid or that make you uncomfortable when discussing sex and sexual morality with your children? Why do you think you are uncomfortable?
- Would you discuss sex in the same way with your sons or daughters?
- At what ages do you believe it is appropriate to discuss sexual morality?
- How do you and your partner share, or divide, teaching sexual morality to the children?
- How do you think your partner's belief affects the way he/she participates?

2) Influences from:

a) Participant's parents:

- How did your parents teach sexual morality?
- What advice do you wish that you had been given when you were a teenager with regard to sexuality and dating?
- How did your parents affect the way you teach sexual morality?
- What are the differences between you and your parents in teaching sexual morality?

b) Church:

- How did your parents' church teach sexual morality?
- How does your church and pastor affect the way you teach sexual morality?
- Are you familiar with "True Love Waits"? If so, do you participate in this program? Do you encourage your children to attend "True Love Waits" meetings? If so, how?

c) Other influences:

- Please describe any influence you think of other than your parents, church, and pastor that affect the way you teach sexual morality.
- What do you think about sex education at school?

3) Children's response:

- How do/did your children respond to your teaching sexual morality?

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